DIARY of a Wimpy Kid

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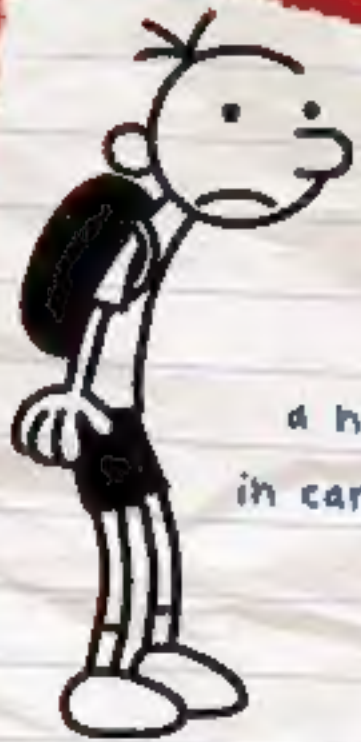


a novel in cartoons

Jeff Kinney

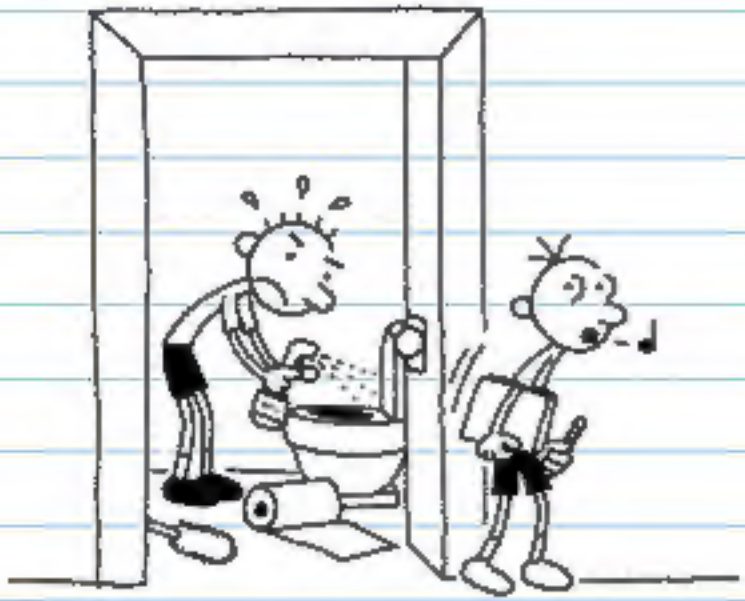
Tuesday, September 7th

First of all, I want to get something straight: this is a JOURNAL, not a diary. I know what it says on the cover but when Mom went out to buy this thing I SPECIFICALLY said to make sure it didn't say "diary" on it. So don't expect me to be all "dear diary this" and "dear diary that".

All I need is for some jerk to catch me carrying this thing around and get the wrong idea.

The other thing I want to clear up right away is how this was NOT my idea, it was Mom's.

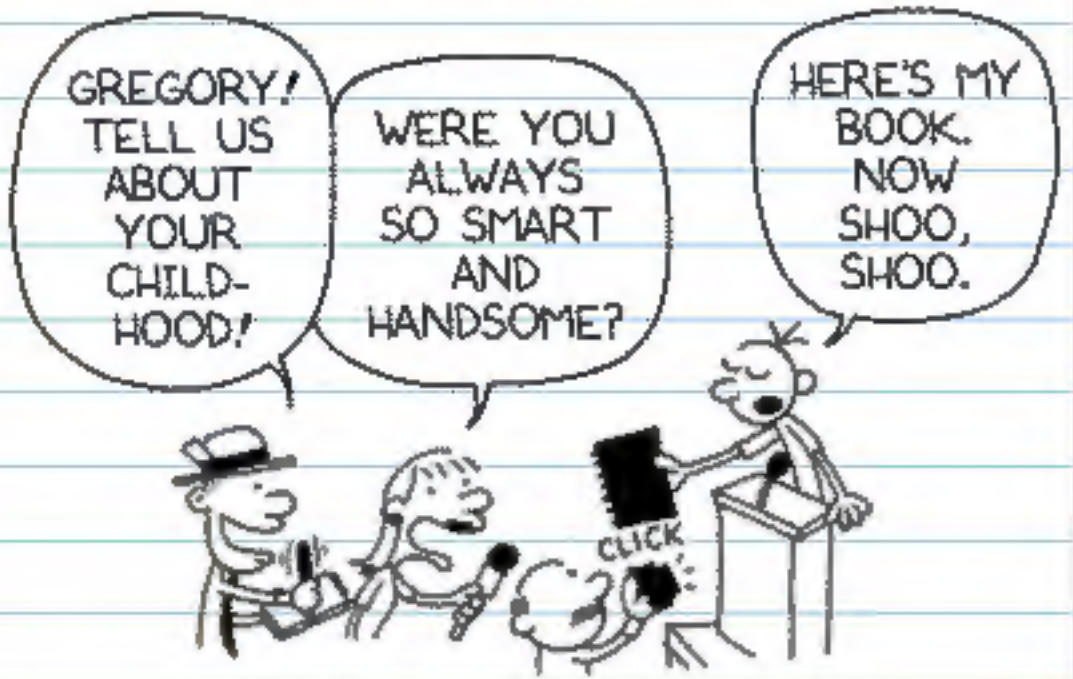
The deal is that if I write in this book a little bit each day I get out of one chore on Saturdays, so of course I picked the one I hate most. But if Rodrick ever finds out he's scrubbing toilets because of this book, I'm dead.



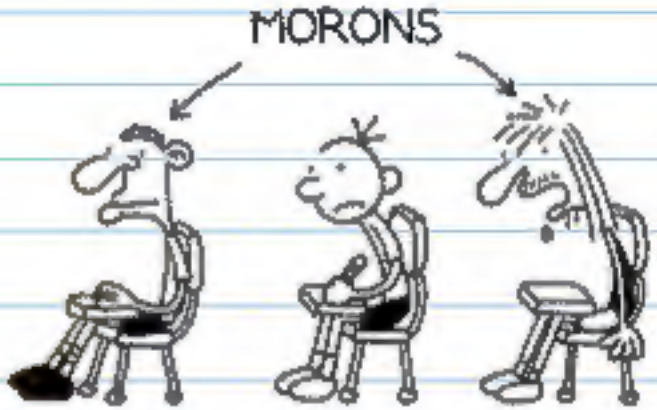
Oh yeah Rodrick's my brother. I try to avoid him anyway but now that I struck this deal with Mom, I better be extra careful.

Anyway I think Mom has this idea I'm going to write down my "feelings" and all that, but she's not actually allowed to read it so I figure I'll just write what I want.

The real reason I agreed to do this at all is because I figure later on when I'm rich and famous I'll have better things to do than answer people's stupid questions all day long.



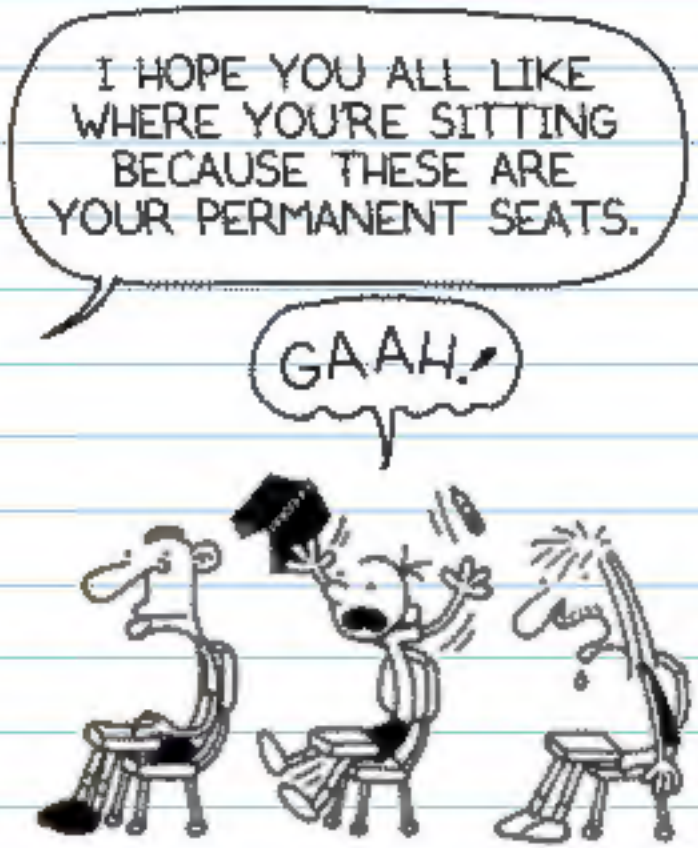
Like I said, one day I will definitely be famous, but for now I'm stuck in the seventh grade with a bunch of morons.



Today is the first day of school and right now we're just waiting around for the teacher to hurry up and finish the seating chart.

So I figured I might as well write in this book and just get it over with for the day.

But I'll tell you something... on the first day of school, you got to be real careful of where you sit. You walk into the classroom and just plunk your stuff down on any old desk and the next thing you know the teacher is saying



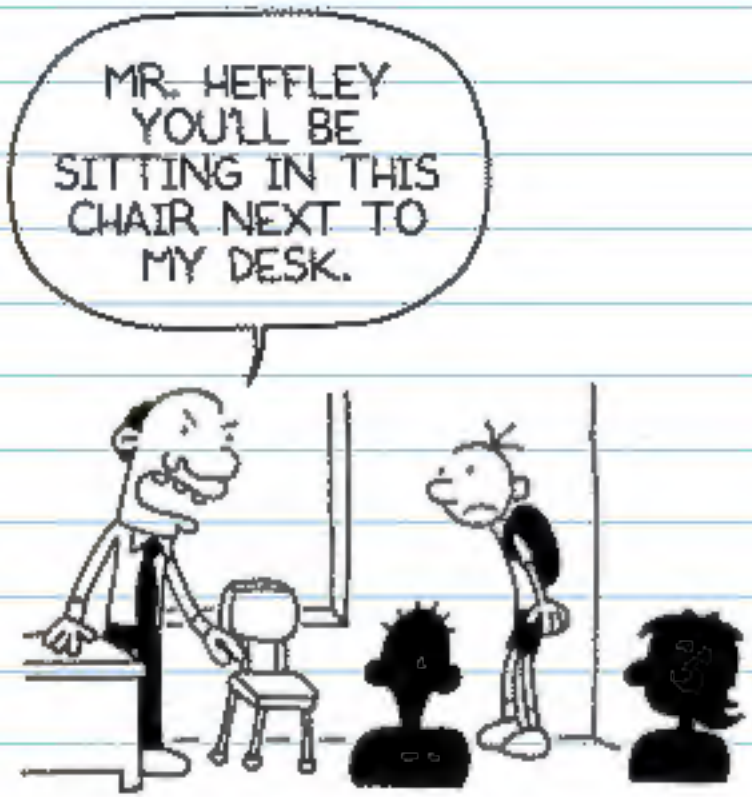
So in this class I got stuck with Chris Hosey in front of me and Lionel James in back of me. Otha Harris came in late and almost sat right next to me but luckily I did some quick thinking and got myself out of that one.

I'm thinking for next period I should just sit in the middle of a bunch of cute girls as soon as I step in the room.

Then again if I do that it just proves that I didn't learn a thing from last year.

Plus the other thing I got to think about is that girls don't let you copy off of them, which could be a real problem in a class like Pre Algebra.

Speaking of seating, something that really stunk today is how in home room I got stuck with some teacher who had Rodrick in his class a few years back.



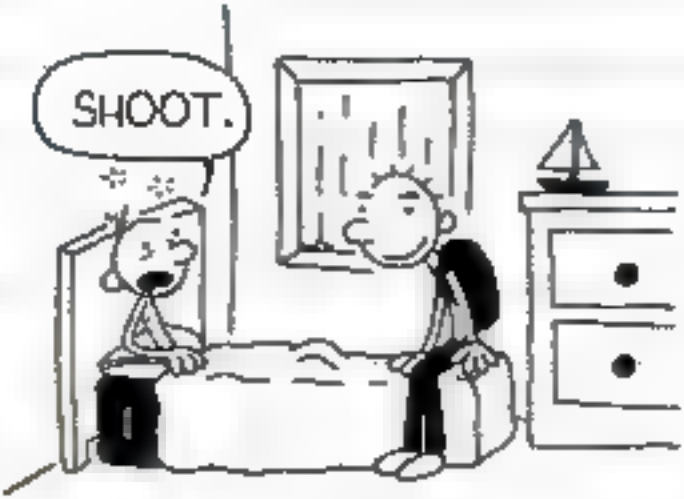
The only good thing I can think about the first day of school is that some of the teachers are new and so you can slide a little.

Anyway the teacher is almost done with the seating chart and I think I wrote enough in this book to keep Mom off my back for today.

Wednesday, September 8th

This morning Mom made me lend my brother Rodrick some of my money so he could buy lunch, which really stunk. I'm still mad at Rodrick for the trick he pulled on me at the beginning of the summer so I'm really not looking to do him any favors.

What happened was that on the first day of summer vacation, he woke me up in the middle of the night dressed up in his school clothes. He told me I slept through the whole summer but that luckily I had woken up in time for the first day of school.



You might think I'm pretty dumb for falling for that one, but I was too groggy to know any better and plus Rodrick had set my clock ahead and pulled the blinds shut.

So I just got up and got dressed and went downstairs to fix myself some breakfast. I must've made a big racket because the next thing I knew Dad was in my face wondering what the heck I was doing eating Cheerios at 3 a.m.

The thing about Dad when he comes downstairs late at night is that he's always just wearing a tee shirt and some boxer shorts. I don't know which is worse, getting yelled at our having to see your father in his underwear.

I keep meaning to ask him to please put on some more clothes the next time he comes downstairs but the right opportunity never comes up.

Anyway it took me a couple of minutes to figure out what all was going on. When I told Dad Rodrick tricked me Dad stomped on down to Rodrick's room in the basement and I followed along.

I was pretty excited to finally see Rodrick get what was coming to him.

But when we got down there Rodrick had covered up his tracks pretty good and you would never know he had been up to something.

Dad just threw up his hands and went back up to bed. So now Dad thought I was an idiot AND a liar.

Come to think of it ever since then Dad has been real suspicious around me, like I'm turning into a bad kid or something.

I'll put it to you this way... if I'm going to do something bad and take the heat like I did that night you better believe I'm going to come up with something a lot more satisfying than eating a bowl of Cheerios in the middle of the night.

Thursday, September 9th

Today in Social Studies I scored pretty big. The teacher made us sit in alphabetical order so the way things fell out I ended up right next to Alex Aruda who is the smartest kid in the class.

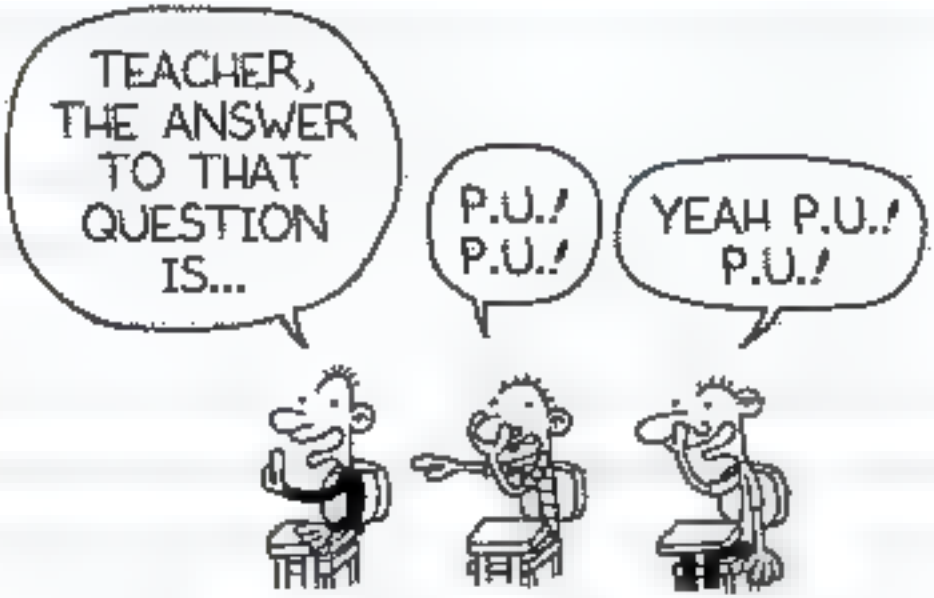
He's super easy to copy off of because he always finishes his tests early and then just puts his paper on the floor next to him while he reads a science fiction novel or something.

Kids whose last names start with the early letters ALWAYS end up being the smartest because they get called on first. Some people think that's not true but if you want to come over to my school I can prove it.

ALEX ARUDA

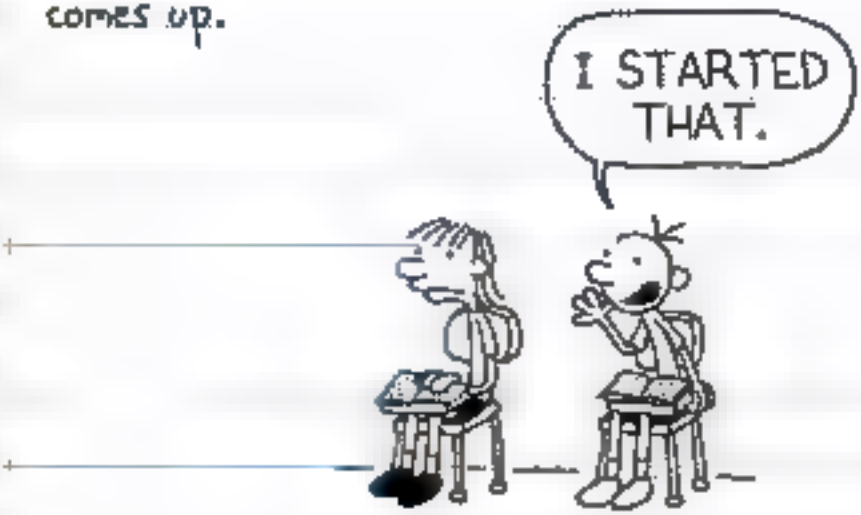
LARRY ZIEGEL

I can only think of one kid who broke the last-name rule, and that's Peter Uteger. He was the smartest kid until the middle of the fifth grade. That's when a couple of us started giving him a hard time about what his initials spelled every chance we got.



Now he doesn't raise his hand at all which makes way for other kids to step forward and take the Smartest Kid title.

I feel a little bad about the whole P.U. thing because I'm one of the guys who started it. But it's hard not to take credit for it whenever it comes up.



I figured out another good thing about writing this journal: when I'm famous, I can cash in on it. I just have to remember to keep it away from Manny, my little brother.

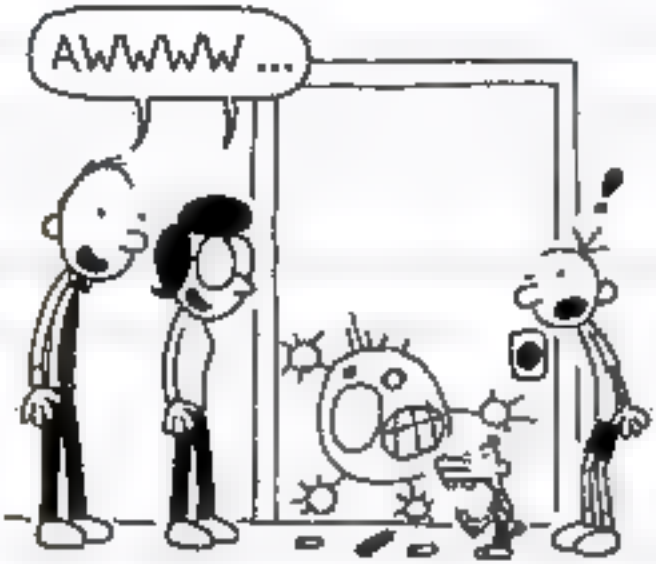
If you have something valuable in the house, believe me, Manny will find a way to destroy it.

Back before Manny came along I remember I was all excited about getting a little brother. After all those years of Rodrick picking on me I figured it was my turn to be a little higher on the totem pole.

But being a big brother didn't turn out like I expected at all. Mom and Dad protect Manny so I can't pick on him, even if he does something to tick me off.

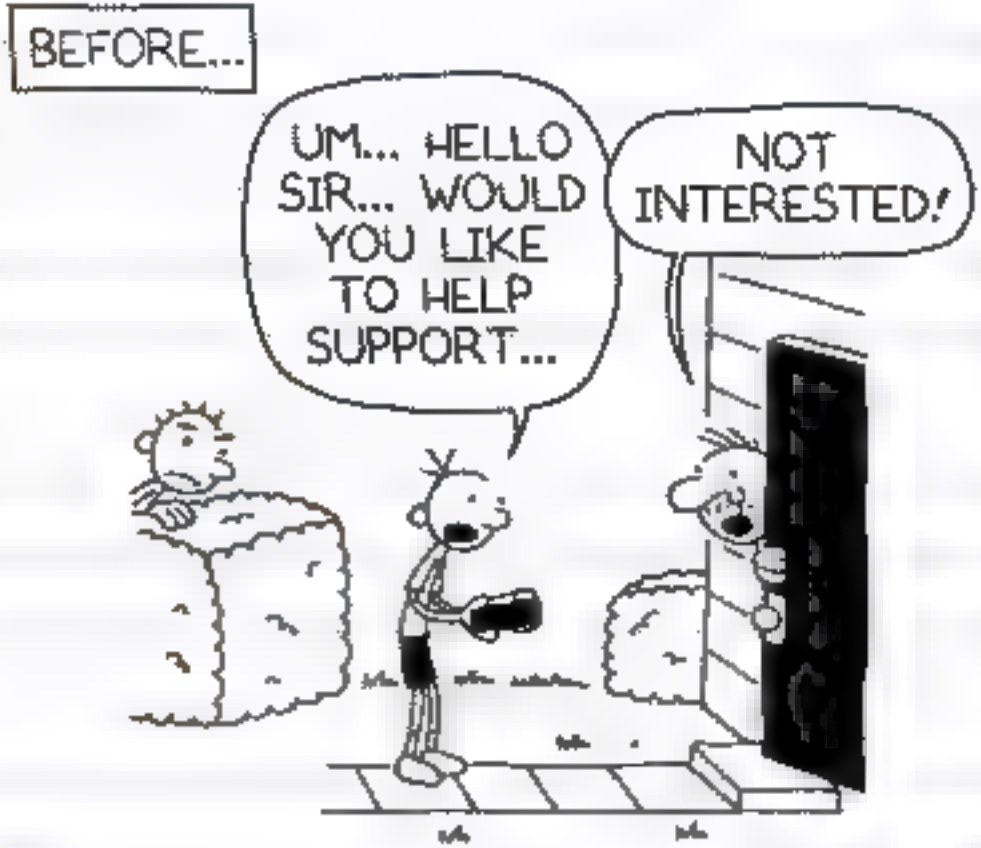
Plus, he's never gotten punished for anything, and believe me, he's deserved it a bunch of times.

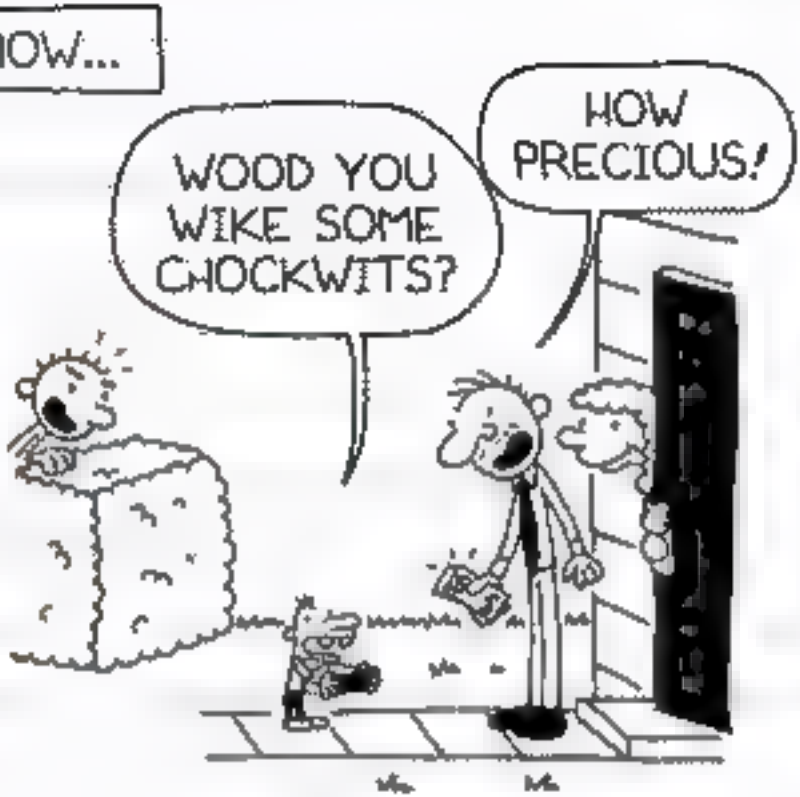
Just the other day he somehow got into my room and used a bunch of magic markers to decorate my door. I thought Mom and Dad would really let him have it but as usual, I was wrong.



So now I'm stuck waking up to this horrible drawing staring at me every day. Mom won't let me paint over it or even cover it up with a poster because she says it might hurt Manny's feelings.

The only good thing about getting a little brother is that now, Rodrick doesn't make me sell his stupid chocolate bars for school fundrasers any more.



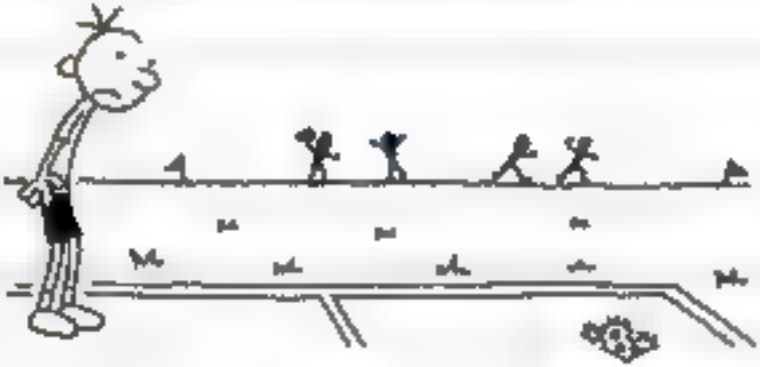


The worst thing about Manny is that when he was real little he couldn't pronounce "brother" so he started calling me "Bubby". And Mom and Dad didn't make him call me my real name even when he COULD say it.

Luckily none of my friends have found out yet but I have had some really close calls.

Friday, September 10th

Yesterday was the first day of P.E., and we started the football unit. The first thing I did was sneak off to the basketball courts and check to see if the cheese was still where it was at the end of last school year, and sure enough it was.



That thing has been sitting on the court since at least last fall and it has caused a whole lot of trouble. It's all moldy and nasty, and ever since it showed up, people have been trying to avoid it.

To give you an idea of how people will go out of their way to stay away from the cheese, it's sitting right under the only hoop with a net in it but nobody's played on that court for a year.

Darnell Washington tripped and fell and brushed the cheese with his finger last year and started this whole thing called the Cheese Touch. It's basically like Cooties, where if you get touched with the Cheese Touch then you have it until you pass it on to somebody else.

The only way to protect yourself from the Cheese Touch was to cross your fingers. But it was really hard to remember to keep your fingers crossed all the time, especially when whoever had the Cheese Touch was looking for his next victim.

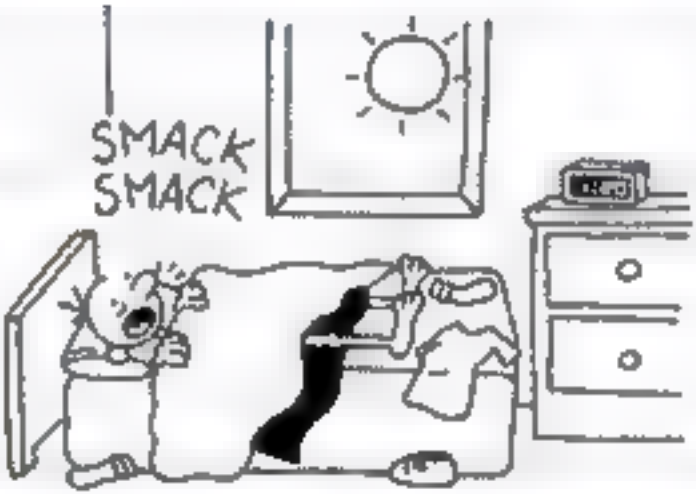
So I taped my fingers together for the last couple weeks of school. I ended up getting a "D" in handwriting but it was totally worth it.

This one kid named Abe Hall got the Cheese Touch in April and nobody would even sit at the same table with him at lunch for the whole rest of the year.

This summer he moved away to California and he took the Cheese Touch with him. Nobody has touched the cheese ever since then, not even with a stick.

Saturday, September 11th

Well the first week of school is finally over so I can sleep late again. Most kids set their alarms and get up early on Saturday morning to watch cartoons or whatever, but not me. The way I know it's time for me to crawl out of bed is when I can't stand the taste of my breath anymore.



Unfortunately Dad wakes up at 6:00 in the morning no matter what day it is and he is not real considerate of the fact that I am trying to enjoy my Saturday.

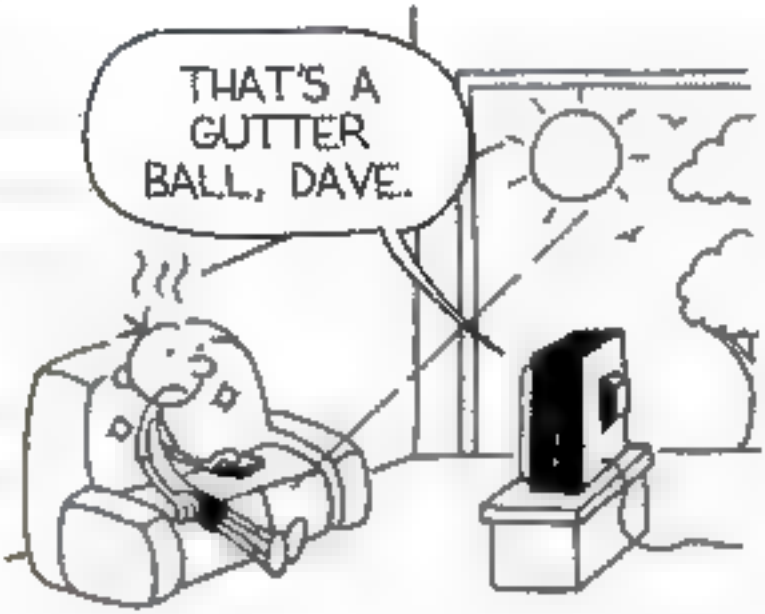
Other than the Saturday morning vacuuming me and Dad get along pretty good. But Rodrick and Dad is another story. It doesn't help that Rodrick is a teenager, which is Dad's least favorite type of person.

I think if there was a petition to ship all of the teenagers in the state to Australia or Alcatraz or something, Dad would be the first person to sign it.

And the first teenager he'd put on the boat would be this kid named Lenwood Heath. Lenwood is always toilet papering peoples' houses and generally stirring up trouble in the neighborhood.

Dad has seemed a lot more relaxed ever since August when Lenwood's dad shipped him off to some military academy in Pennsylvania.

While I'm on the subject of Saturday I should mention some of my other gripes. First of all, there's nothing on t.v. after 1:00 p.m. except golf and bowling. Second of all the sun comes right through the sliding glass window and you can hardly see what's on the t.v. anyway. And on top of that you get all sweaty and stick to the couch. It's practically like a conspiracy against kids to make them go outside and do something besides watch t.v.



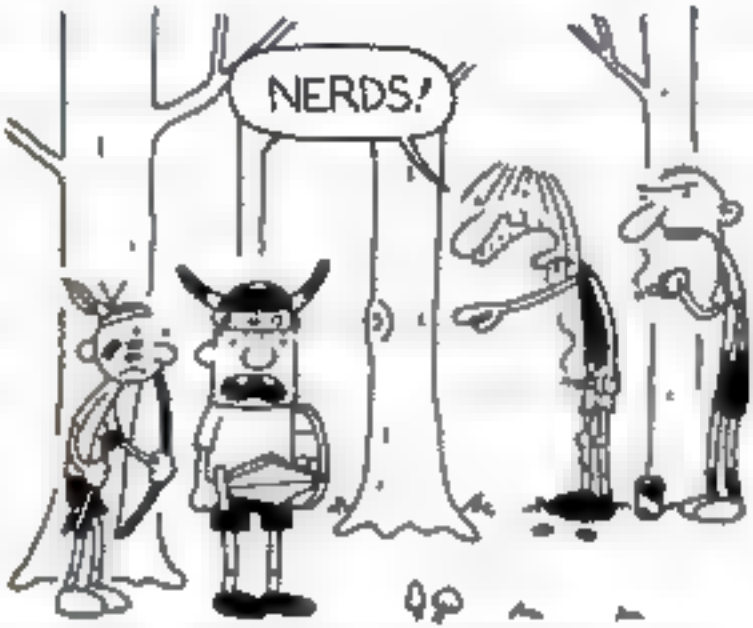
Today after Dad woke me up I decided to just skip the whole t.v. thing and go over to Rowley's.

I know I haven't mentioned Rowley in this journal yet even though he's technically my best friend, but there's a pretty good reason for that.

Rowley kind of ticked me off on the first day of school with something he said at the end of the day when we were getting our stuff from our lockers.

I told Rowley at least a billion times this summer that now that we're in middle school you're supposed to say "hang out", not "play". But no matter how many times I kick him in the shins when he says "play" he always forgets for the next time.

So I guess you could say I've been avoiding Rowley this week. I've been trying to be more careful about my image ever since this summer when we got caught playing Vikings and Indians in the woods by a couple of eighth graders.



What really burned me up about that whole incident is how that guy called me a nerd. Now I'll admit I'm not exactly the most macho guy around in terms of wanting to do push-ups all the time or whatever, so if you want to call me a wimp, then fine. But I know one thing for sure, and it's that I am NOT a nerd.

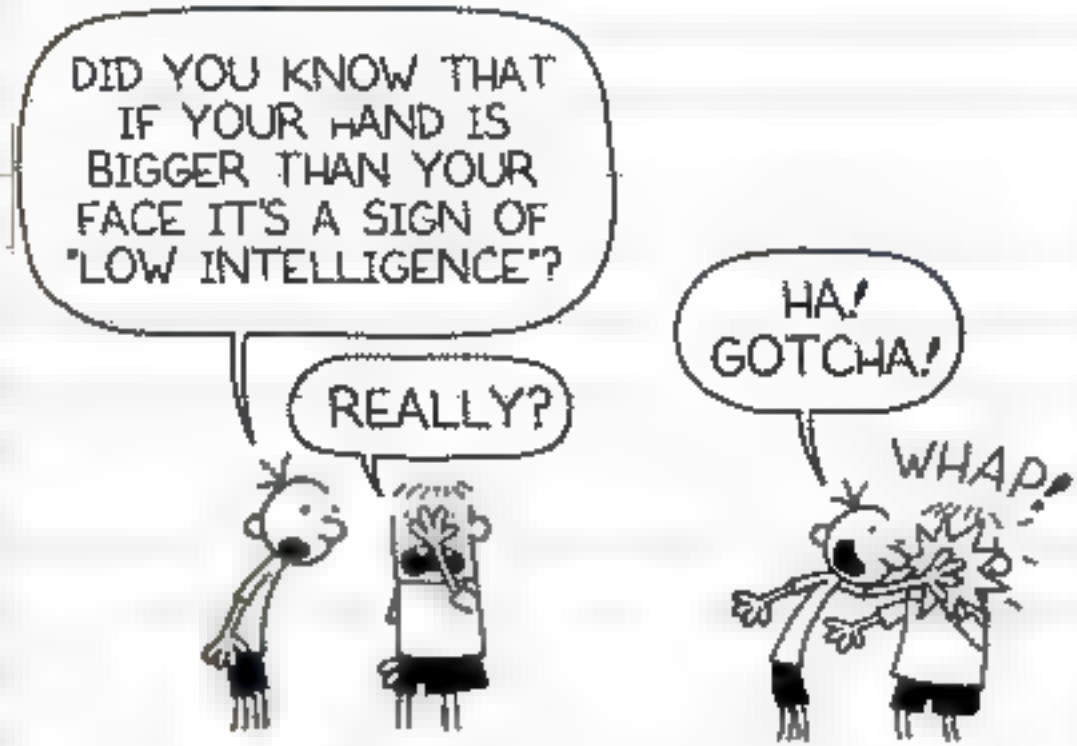
The trouble with nerds is that they give wimpy kids like me a bad name, because people end up lumping us all in the same category. When I think of nerds, I think of teachers' pets and tickle fights and hall monitors, and that is not me.

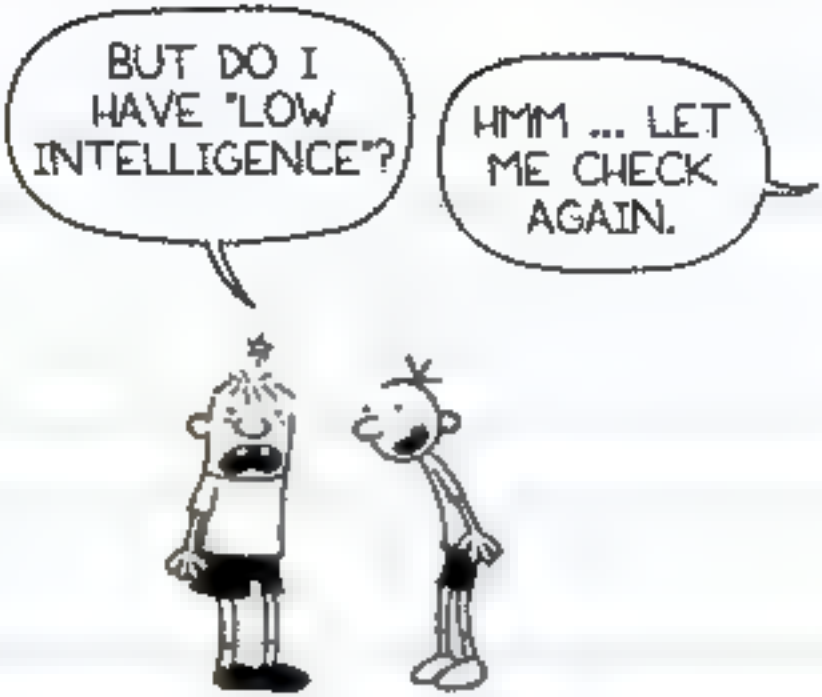
Now Rowley can speak for himself on the whole "nerd" thing, but I will just mention as a side note that he is the only 12-year-old I know who still has a babysitter.

Rowley moved here a couple years ago and I kind of took him under my wing. My former best friend Ben moved to Piscataway and I figured I'd better find myself a new friend to hang out with, so here comes Rowley straight out of Ohio. His mom bought him some book called "How to Make Friends in New Places" and he showed up at my door trying out all these gimmicks.

All that kid would've had to have done is to have come right out and told me he had a Playstation with 42 games and it would have sealed the deal.

The best thing about having Rowley around is that I get a chance to use all the tricks Rodrick used on me that I could never get away with pulling on Manny.



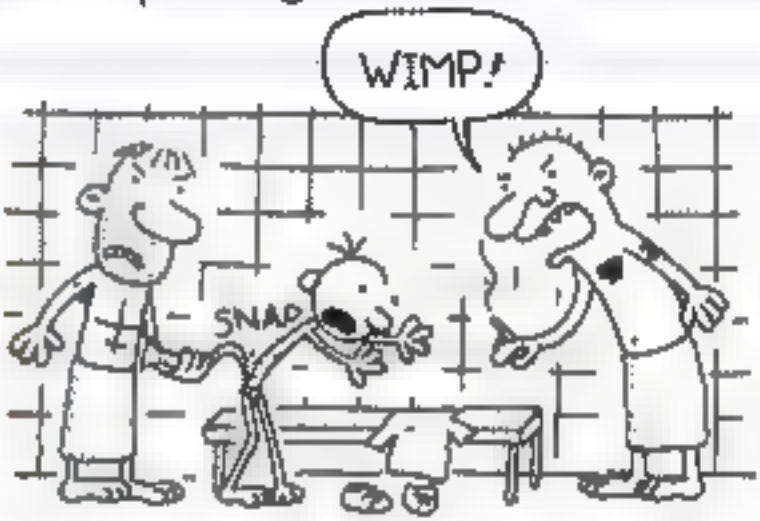


Another bonus about Rowley is that he has never squealed on me, not even once. So in some ways I guess you could say he's the perfect friend.

Sunday, September 12th

Today was a really bad day. Dad ended up running into Mr. Swann at church and Mr. Swann was telling Dad how great Bishop Garrigan High School is, where his son Dan goes.

Dad seemed REAL interested, which is a very bad sign for me. Now I'm sure Bishop Garrigan is a fine school and all that except for the fact that it is ALL BOYS. Number one I want to go to Crossland High School where there are boys AND girls and number two I wouldn't survive the first day at Bishop Garrigan.



Rodrick doesn't have to worry about getting sent to Bishop Garrigan because he is already a junior at Crossland, but I had definitely better figure a way out of this.

Mr. Swann went on and on about how Bishop Garrigan makes "men" out of boys. And from the way Dad kept looking over at me I knew I was in trouble. It doesn't help that Mr. Swann has three boys who are the same ages as us Heffley boys, and Dad's carpool passes by their house every night.

As far as the whole "making men out of boys" idea goes, I think the Swann boys have a pretty good head start.

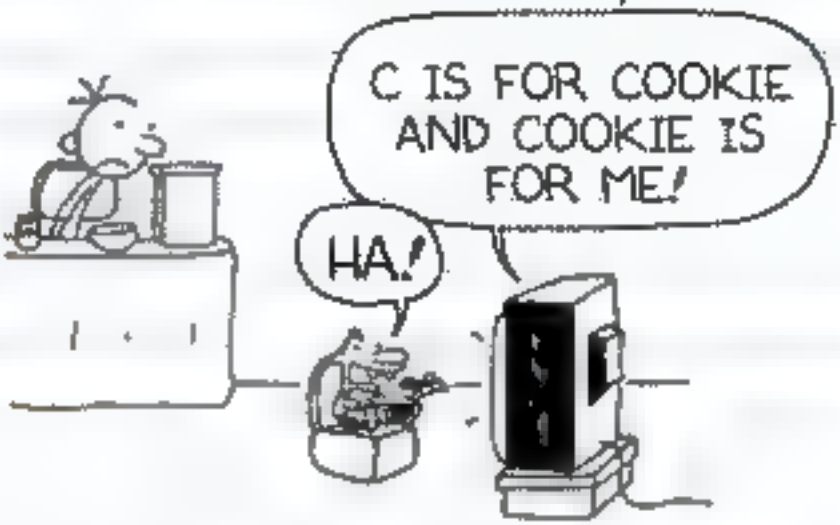
I've still got two years before I go to high school, and hopefully Dad will forget about Bishop Garrigan by then.

But if things look bad down the road I better start working on Mom to change my fate.

Monday, September 13th

Today I woke up and at first I thought it was still summer vacation, which is a really bad way to start a school day.

The new thing is that I have to fix Manny his cereal every morning while Mom gets ready for work. Manny takes his bowl and sits right in front of the t.v. on his plastic potty.



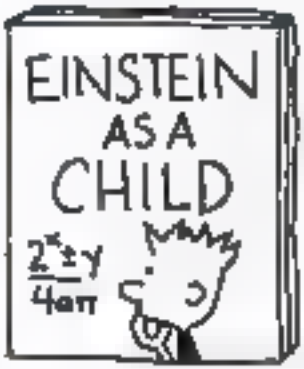
It's not like he's not potty trained but he got in the habit of doing this when he was two and he just never quit.

The worst part is that after he's done he dumps whatever he didn't eat right into the potty. And it's always me who has to clean it up.

Mom always gets on me about not finishing my breakfast, but if you had to scrape a bunch of Cheerios out of a potty every morning I bet you wouldn't have any appetite either.

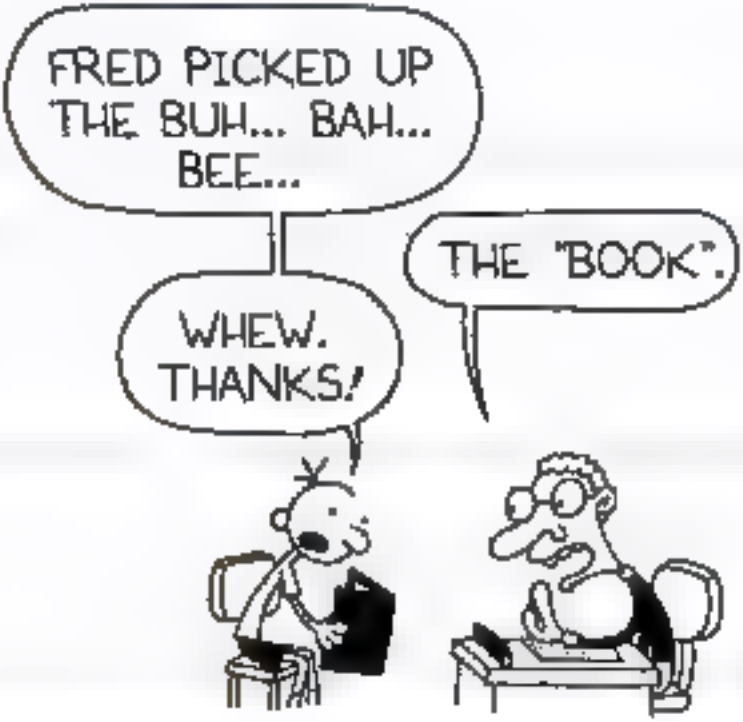
Today at school we got assigned to Reading groups. I was looking forward to finding out which group I was going to get put into because I wanted to see if a big plan I hatched at the end of last year was going to work.

Now, they don't come right out and tell you if you're in the hard group or the easy group, but you can figure it out right away by looking at the covers of the books they give you.



I was pretty mad to find out I got put in the hard group today, which meant my plan failed. I was hoping to get in the easy group because they only have to read about a tenth of the stuff that the kids in the hard group have to read, and there's a whole lot less homework.

At the end of last year I did my best to muff up my screening test to make sure I didn't get put in the hard group.



Another thing I did to make sure I didn't get put in the hard group was to make sure I didn't try to hard on my end-of-the-year essay.

They make you do this four page paper at the end of the year which is another way they figure out how to place you.

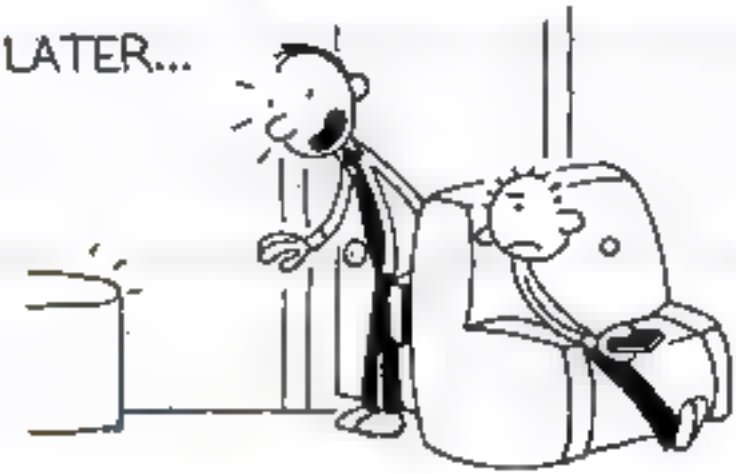
I'm guessing Mom stepped in and made sure I got put in the hard classes, because she knows the principal of the school.

Mom's always saying how I'm a real smart kid but I just don't "apply" myself.

You might wonder why I'd want to get put in the easy classes since I probably deserve to be in the hard classes, but I have a pretty good answer for that.

If there's one thing I learned from Rodrick, it's to set people's expectations real low so you end up surprising everyone by just doing almost nothing at all.

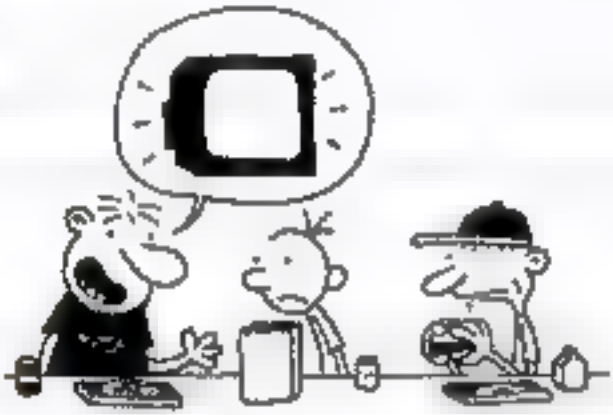
In fact he did something on Friday that totally proves my point.



Anyway I guess I'm glad my plan didn't work because I noticed at least two of the kids in the Bink Says Boo group were holding their books upside down, and I don't think they were joking around.

Tuesday, September 14th

Today at lunch I got to listen to Albert Sandy brag about how his parents bought him a 36-inch t.v. and a DVD player and a bunch of other stuff for his bedroom.



It really makes me mad because my whole goal this summer was to save up for a t.v. so I didn't have to hang out with the rest of my family and watch what they want to watch all the time.

So I spent the whole summer taking care of Mr. and Mrs. Rose's dog while they were on a trip.

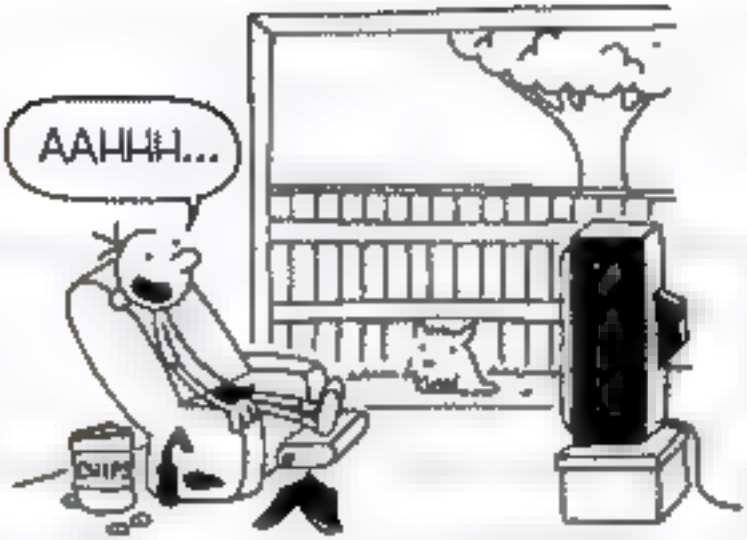
The deal was that I had to go over to their house twice a day to take their dog Stevie out, and I was supposed to get three bucks a day for doing it.

The big problem with Stevie is that I guess he is totally shy when it comes to going to the bathroom in front of strangers so I wasted a whole lot of my summer standing there waiting for this stupid dog to hurry up and go.

So I'd wait and wait and nothing would happen, so I'd just go home. But EVERY time I came back to the house later on Stevie had made a mess in the kitchen. I finally figured out Stevie was just holding it until the coast was clear.

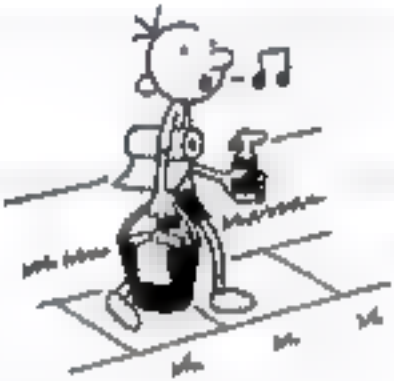
In fact one day I tried an experiment where I left and then came back five minutes later, and sure enough Stevie had pooped right on the kitchen floor.

And it's not like I didn't give the dog a chance to go. The Roses have satellite t.v. and tons of junk food so I basically spent three hours a day on Mr. Roses La-Z-Boy with the air conditioner on full blast.

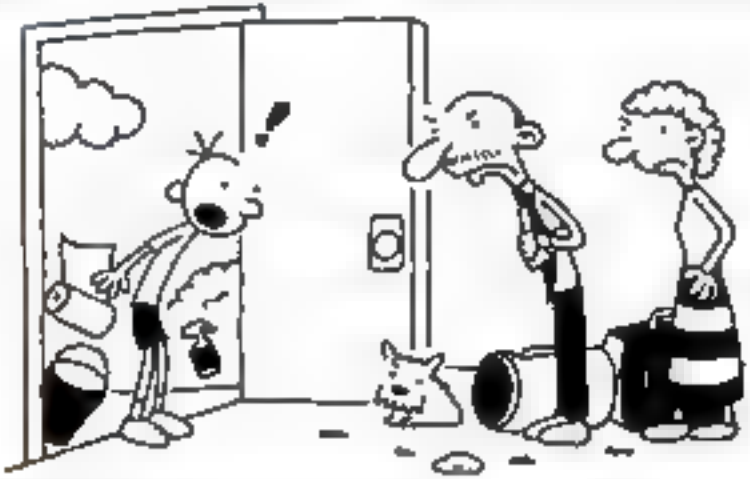


So this one day I finally figured out it was a big hassle to clean up this dog's mess every single day, so I decided to just save myself some time and clean it up all at once.

I let things go for about a week. Then, the night before the Roses were supposed to get back I headed up the hill with all my cleaning stuff.



And wouldn't you know it? The Roses came home a day early.



To make a long story short I didn't get paid a single cent, not even for the days I did my job like I was supposed to. So hearing Albert Sandy bragging about his t.v. just reminded me how I got stiffed and put me in a bad mood for the rest of the day.

Wednesday, September 15th

You know how I said Mom is always taking Manny's side? Well today was some more proof of that.

I made Manny his cereal like I always do, but this time I accidentally poured the milk in before the cereal. And when I poured the cereal in on top of that, Manny just about lost his mind. He made a huge racket, crying and hollering and all that, and Mom came down to see what was going on. So I told her what happened and I figured she would just tell Manny to pipe down and eat his stupid cereal.

But instead she says "I wouldn't eat it either." And then she gives Manny a big hug and makes me pour him a new bowl of cereal, this time in the right order.

I guess I should've expected it. A couple weeks ago when Manny was at daycare he opened up his lunchbox and when he took out his sandwich he had a fit because it was cut in two halves, not four squares like he usually gets it. So the daycare people had to call Mom up at work to get her to come over so Manny would calm down.

Thursday, September 16th

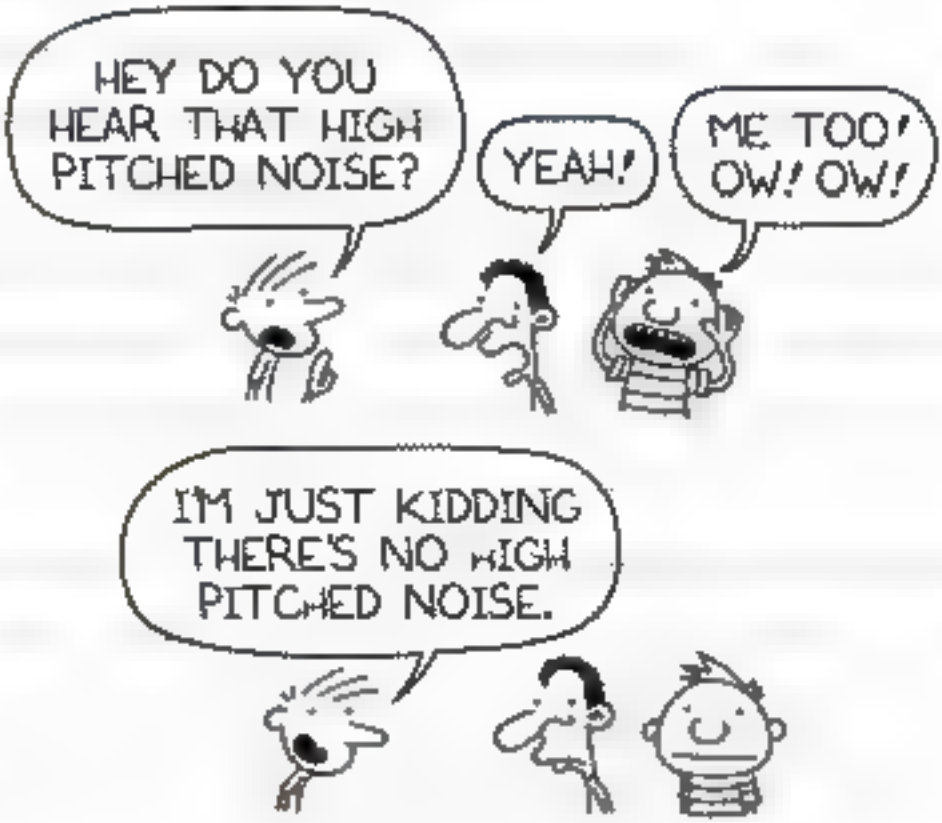
Today I got totally dissed by Christine Coolidge. I asked her if she would be my lab partner for Science and she told me she already had a partner.

But then later on in the class I saw her walk up to Bryce Anderson and ask him if he would be her lab partner. I'm not surprised she went after Bryce because he is the most popular kid in our grade for something like three years running. But she didn't have to go and lie about it either.

It used to be a lot more simple with girls. Way back in the third grade, the deal was, if you were the fastest runner in your grade, you were the king. And in my grade, that was Ronnie Jones.

Nowadays its a lot more complicated and I'm sure kids like Ronnie Jones are sitting around scratching their heads wondering what happened.

Not only does Bryce Anderson get all the girls but he also has a big group of cronies that follows him around and basically worships every word that comes out of his mouth.



The thing that really stinks is that I have ALWAYS been into girls, but kids like Bryce have only come around to liking girls in the past couple of years. I remember how Bryce used to be back in fourth and fifth grade.

And of course now I don't get any credit from the girls for sticking with them for all this time.

Like I said Bryce is the most popular kid in the seventh grade so that leaves all the rest of us scrambling to move up the ladder.

The best way to figure out how popular you are is to get a hold of one of the Slam Books that gets passed around. Basically they're notebooks where people put rankings down for most popular boy, most popular girl, best hair, cutest butt and all of that.

The problem with these books though is that they're in regular notebooks which only have 24 lines on each page. So people like me who don't make the top 24 have to guess where they rank. The best I can figure right now is that I'm somewhere around 32nd or 33rd most popular, but I think I'm about to move up a rank because Charlie Davies (who is a really nice kid) gets his braces on Tuesday.

What someone needs to do is start up a Slam Book with one of those yellow legal pads of paper, because they have something like 32 lines in them so at least kids like me could get a better picture of where they stand. But the problem is that it takes a popular kid to start a Slam Book and I'm sure if I started one it would get filled out by all nerds.

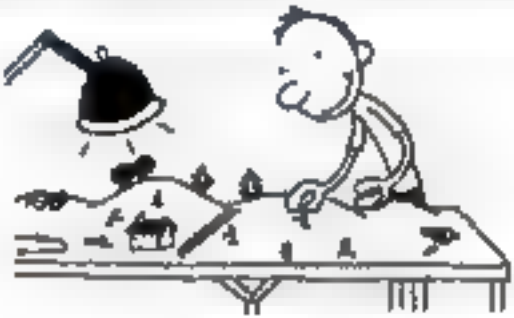
Today I got a hold of a Slam Book and I was trying to explain all this to Rowley on the bus ride home, but honestly sometimes with him I feel like it's just in one ear and out the other.

Friday, September 17th

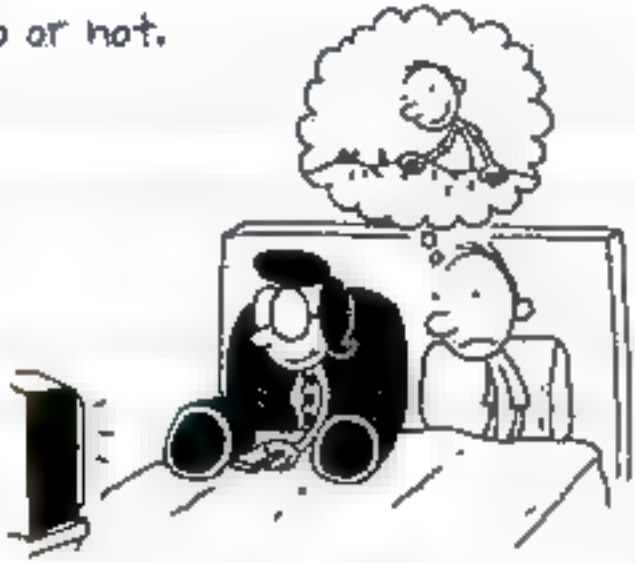
Tonight, Dad was showing me the newest stuff he added to his Civil War diorama in the basement, and I got to admit, it's pretty cool.

Dad's not like the regular kinds of dads you see on t.v., sitting around watching football and drinking beer and all of that.

Any free second he gets you can be sure he's down in his workroom painting his little soldiers or moving stuff around the battlefield trying to make it as accurate as possible.

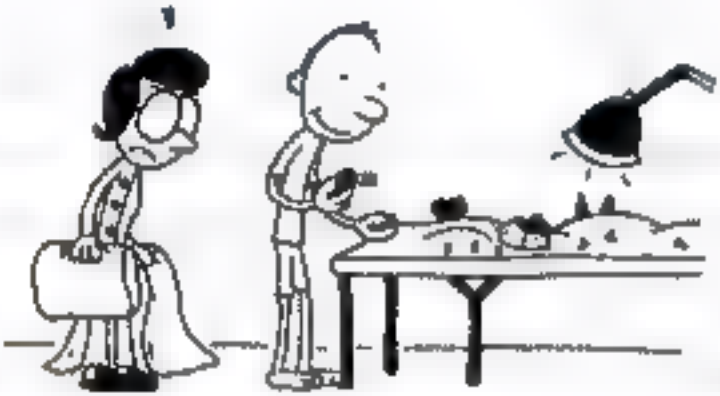


Dad would be happy to spend the whole weekend working on his diorama, but Mom usually has other ideas. Mom likes to rent these romantic comedies, and Dad has to watch them with her whether he wants to or not.



A couple weeks ago when Mom rented one of these movies Dad tried to get clever and fake out Mom. When she got up to go to the bathroom, Dad stuffed a bunch of pillows under the blankets to make it seem like he had fallen asleep.

So Mom watched the rest of the movie and didn't catch on that Dad had made a decoy until the movie was over.



Dad was in the dog house for a long time after that one.

Another thing I should mention about Dad's workroom is that he is REAL protective of it. He keeps the door bolted shut with one of those combination locks, so I hardly ever even get to step foot in there.

I don't even think Manny knows the diorama exists. I've seen Dad say some things to Manny to make sure Manny keeps clear of that part of the basement.

Rowley came over tonight, and Dad gets real edgy when Rowley's around. For some reason Dad has it in his head that Rowley is a klutz and that he's going to break something every time he comes over.

Dad told me about this nightmare he always has about Rowley ruining his battlefield in one klutzy move.

So every time Rowley comes over he gets the same greeting:

Saturday, September 18th

Today I got out of bed early because the vacuuming thing was more than I could handle. I watched cartoons for a while but then I remembered the other reason I don't get up early on Saturdays. With Dad doing his chores all around you it makes you feel guilty and takes all the joy out of just laying around doing nothing.

Tonight I'm going to spend the night at Rowley's. It's a pretty big deal because I haven't spent the night over there in something like a year and a half.

The main reason I haven't slept over there in so long is because Rowley's dad really doesn't like me.

It all goes back to something that happened last June. We were watching some corny movie Rowley had where there were these kids that taught themselves a secret language that only they could understand.

(TRANSLATION: LET'S ALL DROP OUR BOOKS ON THE FLOOR AT EXACTLY 2:30.)

Me and Rowley thought the whole secret language thing was pretty cool but we couldn't figure out how to do it like the kids in the movie.

So we decided to make up our own secret language and we tried it out over dinner.

Well, Rowley's dad must have cracked our code because the next thing I knew, I was going home early.

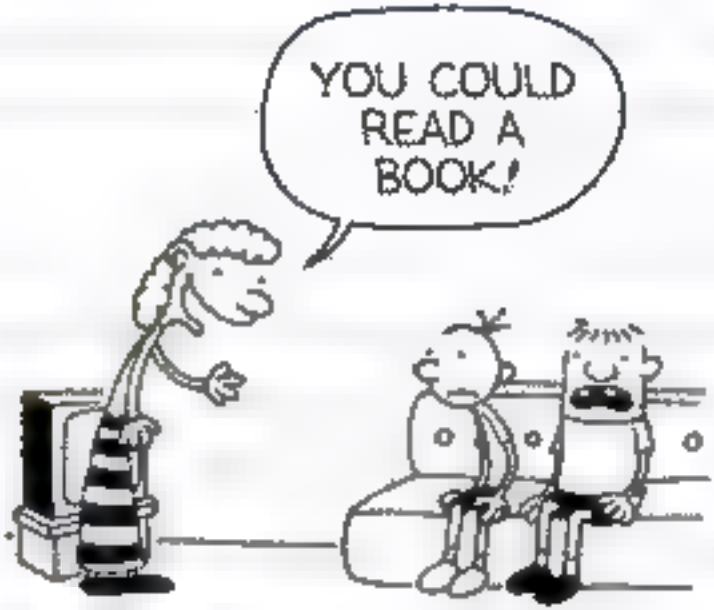
And that was the last time I was invited for a sleepover.

So I don't know why Mr. Jefferson is giving me a second chance. Either he's gotten over the whole secret language thing or he's just forgotten why he doesn't like me.

Sunday, September 19th

The sleepover at Rowley's last night ended up being a nightmare. The first hint I had that things were going to go wrong was when Rowley's mom told us "That's enough t.v. for the night" at 7:00.

I was like, "Well, what are we supposed to do now?" And she said



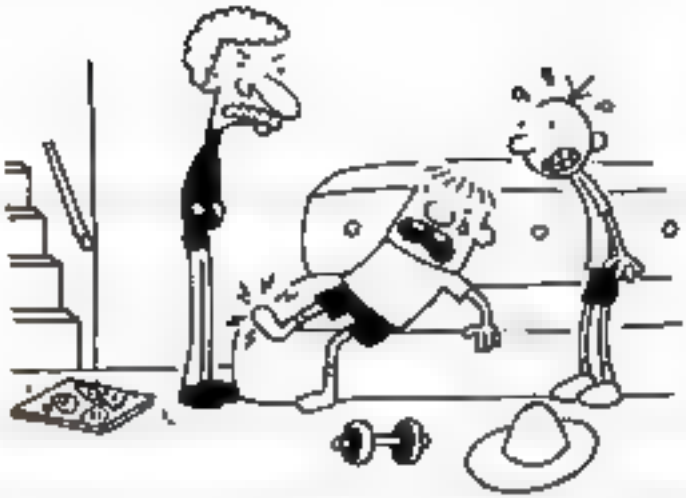
So of course I thought she was joking. But right when I was telling Rowley how I thought his mom was pretty funny she showed up again with her arms full with her arms full of books.

I realized right then I was in for a pretty long night. Since the t.v. was off limits, video games were out, too. So I tried to think up ways we could keep ourselves entertained. I broke out some board games, but Rowley had to take a bathroom break something like every five minutes so it made our game of Risk go on forever.

Every time Rowley came back from a bathroom break he would run down the stairs and kick this giant sombrero across the room.

It was funny the first ten times or so but after a while it really started getting on my nerves. So this one time when he was upstairs I put one of his dad's dumbells under the hat to see if he would still kick it.

And sure enough, Rowley comes running down the stairs and gives the hat a big kick.

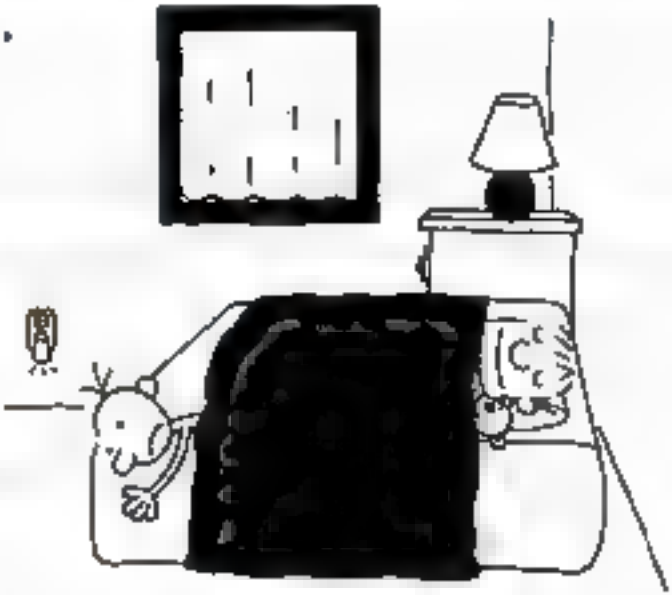


Rowley's dad was down the stairs in no time flat. I don't think Rowley knew I put the dumbell under the hat, but Rowley's dad seemed pretty suspicious.

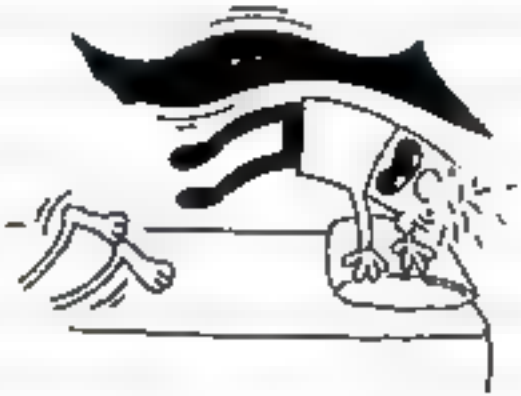
Anyway I guess he didn't have enough hard evidence or he would have sent me home right then. I felt a little bit bad about doing what I did, but if you think about it, if Rowley's parents hadn't make us turn off the t.v., this never would have happened.

At 9:00 Rowley's mom came down to say it was "lights out". If I would've known Rowley's bedtime on weekends was 9:00, believe me, I never would have come over.

And then I found out another ugly surprise: there was no guest bed, so I had to sleep in the same bed with Rowley! I tried to lay as far away from Rowley as possible, but it was impossible to get to sleep with half of my body hanging off the bed.



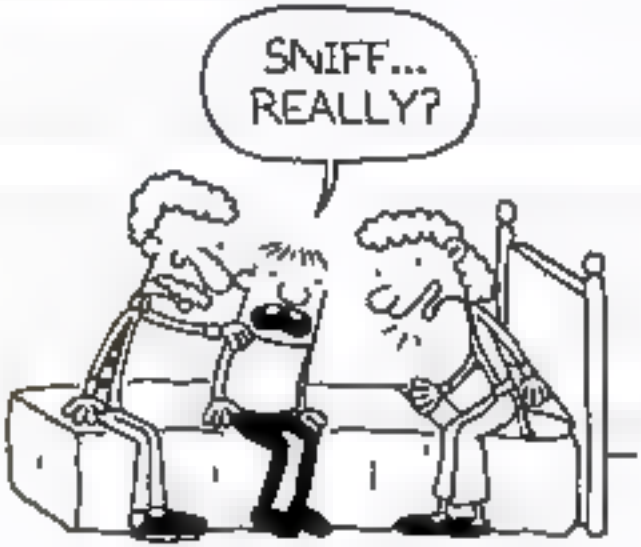
Rowley fell asleep right away but it must've taken me two hours. But right when I finally started to drift off Rowley lets out this scream which scared me so bad I dropped right out of the bed and onto the hardwood floor.



Rowley's parents came running in and Rowley starts babbling all of this incoherent gibberish.

It turns out he had a nightmare that a chicken was hiding underneath him and that's what made him yell out. But I think Rowley was so out of it he didn't really realize it was just a dream.

So Rowley's parents took him into their room and spent the next twenty minutes calming him down and telling him it was just a dream and how there really was no chicken.



Man, if I woke my Dad up with some nonsense about a chicken you better believe he wouldn't be giving me a big hug and telling me everything was O.K. But that just goes to show how different my parents are from Rowley's.

And I just wanted to make a note that nobody seemed all that concerned that I took a three-foot fall onto the floor, even though that happened for real and not just in some stupid dream.

I think Rowley spent the night in his parents' bed, which was just fine by me, because without Rowley and his nightmares I was finally able to get some sleep.

But the second I woke up this morning I came home and poured myself a big bowl of junk cereal and did my best to forget about the whole experience.

Monday, September 20th

I couldn't wait for school to be over with today so I could go home and play Twisted Wizard, a video game I've been playing for five days straight.

The only problem with Twisted Wizard is that you can't save your progress, so you have to just leave it on all the time. So imagine how I felt today when I realized I got home about five seconds too late.

Believe me, from now on I am going to put a piece of black tape over the power light so it never happens again.

I don't know if I've mentioned it before, but I am SUPER good at video games. I don't know anyone who has beat as many games as me, and I've got all my victories on video tape to prove it.

Unfortunately Dad does not exactly appreciate my video game skills. He is always getting on me about going outside and doing something "active".

So today I tried to explain to him that with video games, you can play sports like football and soccer and you don't even have to get all hot and sweaty.

But as usual, Dad didn't get my logic. He's a pretty smart guy in general but when it comes to common sense sometimes I wonder about him.

Anyways that's how I found myself shut out of the house this afternoon.

I'm sure Dad would dismantle my video game system if he could figure out how to. But luckily the people who make these things make them parent-proof.

So like I said, I was shut out of the house looking for some way to entertain myself.

What I always do when Dad makes me go outside is I just go over to Collin's house.

I'm not a huge fan of Collin's but he has two things going for him. One, he doesn't mind watching me play his video games, and two, his dad has every Spider Man comic book since 1968.

I would go over to Rowley's house to play video games but he always want to "take turns" which really breaks my concentration.

Plus Rowley doesn't understand that if he plays using my memory card it will really screw up my stats.

The other thing about Rowley is that he's not a serious gamer like me. He's got this one racing game called Formula One Racing. If you ever want to beat him in it, just name your car something stupid and watch what happens.

So today I played Twisted Wizard over at Collin's until it was time to come home for dinner.

On my way up the hill I made sure to jump through the Thompson's sprinkler to make it look like I was all hot and sweaty and then I timed my entrance perfectly.

So my trick worked on Dad but it kind of backfired with Mom because when she saw me, she made me take a shower before dinner.

Tuesday, September 21st

Dad must have been pretty proud of himself for his idea to kick me out of the house yesterday, because he did it again today.

I was actually going to go outside anyway because Rowley had gotten this new model rocket we wanted to try out. So we went down to the school and set it off. But the wind carried it all the way to the woods at the end of the football field.

I don't know if I ever mentioned it before, but there's a bully who hangs out in those woods named Herb e Reamer. Kids like me and Rowley stay as far away from those woods as possible.

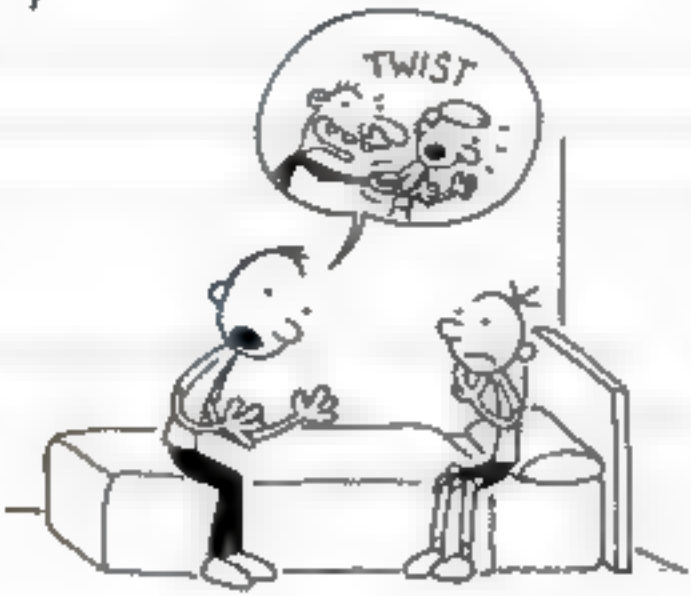
It's a real pity, too, because like I said, it was a brand-new rocket.

I have no idea how old Herbie Reamer is or where he lives. I guess it's possible that he lives right there in the woods like a wild animal. All I know is that he's been around long enough that he terrorized Rodrick and his friends when they were in my grade.

The thing that stinks is that Herbie Reamer's woods are right between my house and the school. So if we could cut through the woods it would save us something like twenty minutes of walking.

I was telling Dad all about Herbie Reamer the other day. Dad told me about the bully from when he was growing up, Sam Sharman.

Dad said Sam Sharman did this pinch where he grabbed your skin and twisted it around two times.



Dad told me the way all the neighborhood kids dealt with Sam Sharman was that they banded together and told the principal on him. Dad said Sam cried, and that he never did the Sam Sharman pinch again. And now he's an air conditioner repairman and apparently now he's a really nice guy.

Well, from the sound of Sam Sharman, he wouldn't last two seconds against Herbie Reamer. But I didn't want to hurt Dad's feelings so I just tried to act impressed by his story.

After we lost the rocket we went up to Rowley's to play cards. But I lost track of the time and I was late for dinner at my house. So on my way down the hill I tried to think of a good excuse to get me out of trouble with Mom.

Mom was pretty hot at me for being late, just like I expected. So I told her that the clock in Rowley's kitchen must be wrong, and that I thought I was right on time.

And do you know what Mom did? She called Rowley's mom and caught me red handed.

So Mom was really mad that I lied. But as far as being tricky goes, Mom shouldn't blame me, because I learned everything I know from her.

I remember this one time when I was in the second grade and Mom couldn't get me to brush my teeth. So she made this pretend call to the dentist and I totally fell for it.

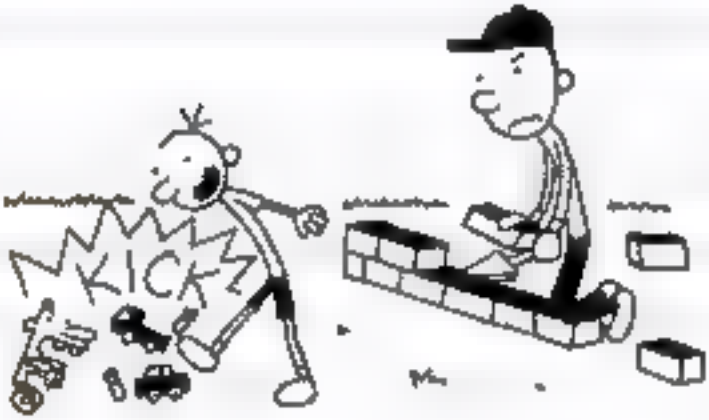
In fact, that's when I started brushing my teeth five times a day.

Mom said she was going to think about what my punishment should be for telling a lie, and she'd let me know as soon as she came up with something that fit the "crime".

See, that's the difference between Mom and Dad. Dad is pretty simple. If you mess up in front of him, he just throws whatever is in his hand at you.

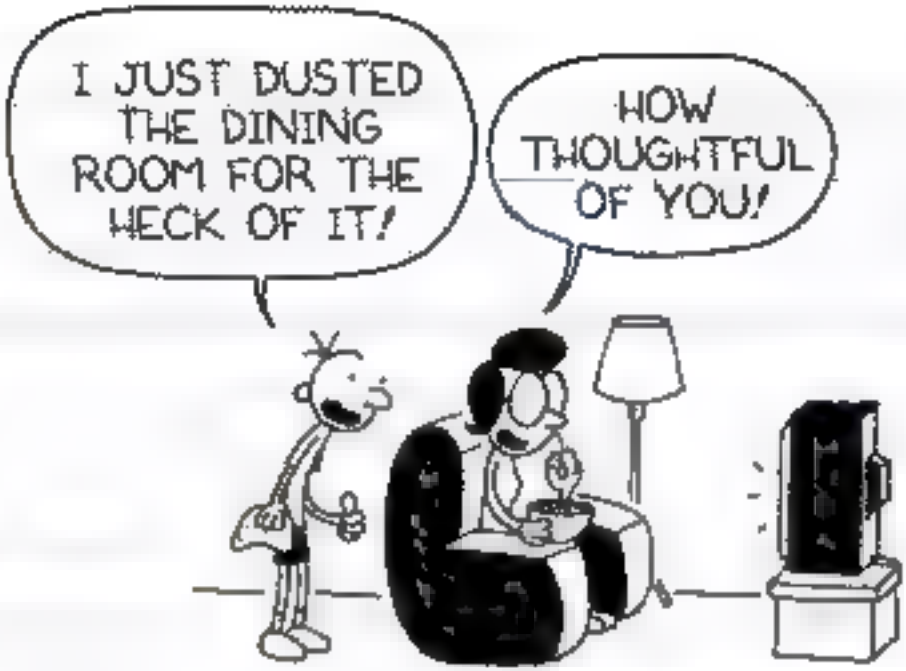
GOOD TIME TO MESS UP:

BAD TIME TO MESS UP:



But Mom's a lot more crafty with her punishments. She thinks about it for a few days, and the waiting ends up being just about as bad as the punishment.

In the meantime you end up doing all these nice things hoping it'll get you off easier.



But then after a few days, just when YOU forget about the punishment that's coming, that's when she gets you.

The only good thing about Mom's punishments is that she's pretty soft. So if you just lay low for a while you can pretty much always get out of the punishment early.

Anyway, that's what I'm counting on while I wait for this punishment to get handed down.

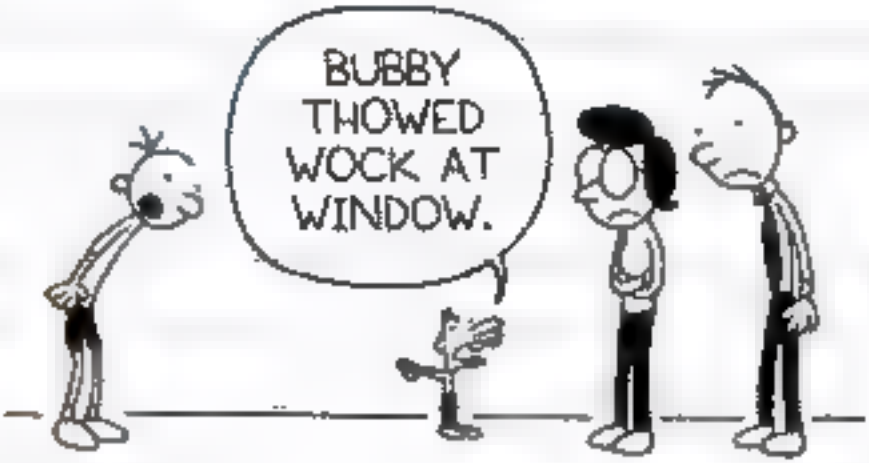
Wednesday, September 22nd

Well, now I've gone and done it. Remember how I said yesterday that while you're waiting for Mom to hand down her punishment you end up doing all this good stuff to make her change her mind? It was that kind of thinking that got me in this extra trouble I'm in now.

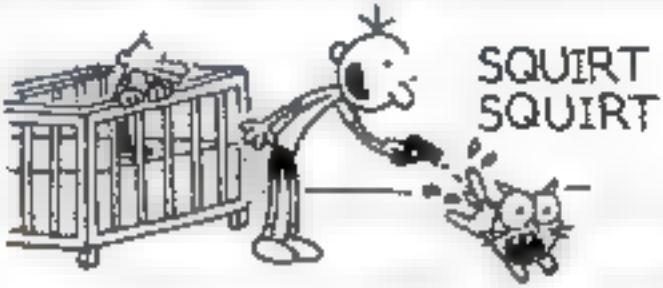
Today after school I thought maybe if I washed Mom's car before she got home, she might go easy on me with the punishment thing. So that's what I did, but I made the mistake of using Brillo to rub off all the bugs and tar spots. So I was in for the surprise of my life when I rinsed the car off.

I TOTALLY ruined the paint job. I thought about just denying everything when Mom asked me how her car got scratched up, but Manny was there to see everything.

Manny has been telling on me since he could talk. In fact, he has told on me for stuff I did BEFORE he could talk. One time when I was eight, I broke the sliding glass door, but Mom and Dad couldn't peg it on me. But Manny was there to witness it and he squealed on me three years later.



So after Manny started talking, I had to start worrying about all the bad things he saw me do when he was real small.



I used to be a tattle tale myself until I learned my lesson. This one time I told on Rodrick for saying a bad word. Mom asked me which word he said, so I spelled it out. And it was a long one, too. Not only did Rodrick get away scot free but I got punished for knowing how to spell a bad word.

Like I said, I knew I couldn't talk Manny out of telling on me for using the Brillo on the car, so I decided to try a trick I've been saving up for a situation like this.

I packed up a bag and made it seem like I was going to have run away from home rather than face Mom and Dad for what I did.

I got to give Rodrick credit for this one. He used to pull it on me when he did something bad and he knew I was going to tell on him.

He'd basically just walk outside and then come home five minutes later, but by that time I was in pieces and couldn't even remember the bad thing that he did.

So I left the house and waited five minutes and then came back inside. I was expecting to find Manny in the foyer bawling like a baby but he wasn't there at all.

I went around the house looking for him, and I started to get really nervous because I'm not supposed to leave Manny alone.

But I found him in the kitchen, and guess what? He was halfway finished with my giant Hershey's Kiss I've been saving since the summer.

So things turned from bad to worse.

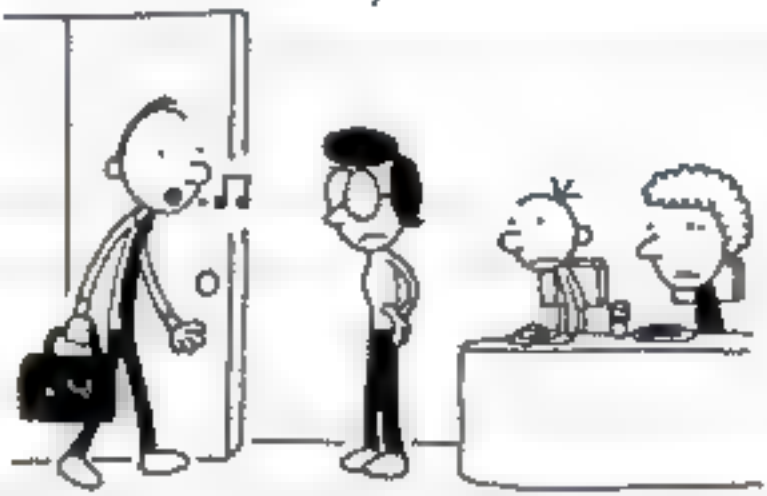
When Mom got home I actually spilled the beans to her about the car as fast as I could.

I was basically trying to keep Manny quiet about how I left the house, which would have gotten me in a lot more trouble than ruining her car.

Mom just listened with a frown on her face and then told me we'd have to wait until Dad got home to see what he thought about what I did.

I figured she might do that. So I pulled another trick I learned from Rodrick: I invited Gramma over for dinner. I figured nothing too bad could happen if she was around, and I knew I could use any protection I could get.

So at 6:00 on the dot Dad came home, and of course he's in a great mood for some reason. That always happens to me when I'm in wait-for-Dad-to-get-home kind of trouble. It stinks because you know he's just gonna be that much madder when he finds out what you did.



Mom kept quiet because Gramma was around, so at least that part of my plan worked out. After dinner I just snuck up to my room as quietly as I could. I think Mom is telling Dad about the car right now because it's real quiet downstairs.

Rodrick hasn't made me feel any better about this whole thing. Whenever I'm in trouble he tells me mentions to me how I'm probably going to get "The Belt".

As far as I know Dad doesn't believe in that kind of punishment, but Rodrick always seems to think Dad is going to make an exception for me.

I have done my best to make sure Dad reads articles from parenting magazines from time to time to let him know that kind of thing doesn't fly these days.

I just cut those articles out and slip them into whatever book he's reading at the time.

I think I hear Dad heading up the stairs now.

If these are the last words I ever write, then I leave all my comic books and action figures to Rowley. And please throw the other half of my Hershey's Kiss away so Manny doesn't get it.

Thursday, September 23rd

Well, I lived to see another day. Last night when Dad knocked on my door, I peeked through the crack and saw that he wasn't wearing the Belt, so I let him in.

Dad wasn't even all that mad, mostly because it wasn't his car that got scraped up. So he just told me not to use Brillo to clean a car again and that was that.

Mom was another story. Her punishment for ruining her car was that I have to clean the whole basement.

And she said if she catches me lying again she'll take away my video games for good. So I better be pretty honest from now on.

So now that all that stuff was behind me, I could switch my focus back to school.

We just got our first big assignment in English, which is to do a book report. I've been milking the same book for the past five years: Encyclopedia Brown Does it Again. There are about 12 short stories in there, but I always just treat one short story like it's the whole book and the teacher never notices.

And to give you an idea of how short each story is, I can finish one in about three and a half minutes without really trying.

These Encyclopedia Brown stories are always the same. It's always about how somebody commits some lame crime like stealing a fish and then Encyclopedia figures out who did it and makes them look stupid.

I have to say that no matter how hard I try, I have NEVER figured out one of these stories before the end. So I guess I'm not as brainy as Encyclopedia.

I'm kind of an expert at writing these book reports by now so I know how to write exactly what a teacher wants to hear.

Man, that Encyclopedia is so smart and I bet it's cause he reads so many books.

I'll bet you're right!

There were a bunch of hard words in this book but I looked them up in the dictionary so now I know them.

I guess you're a bit of a "sleuth" yourself!

So for me, book reports are no sweat.

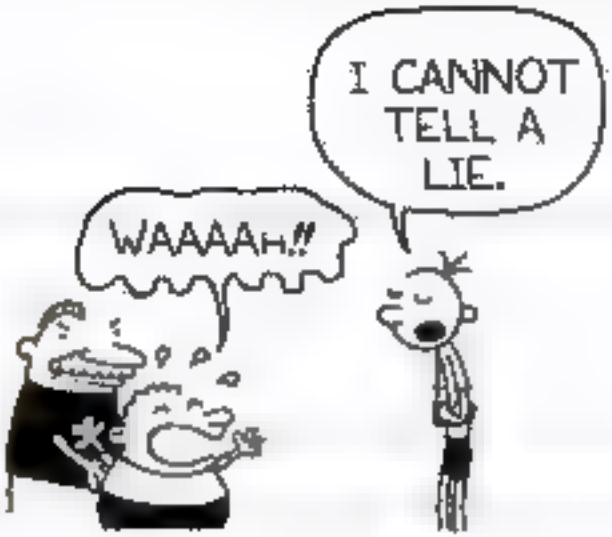
I forgot to mention that this afternoon I took care of part one of Mom's punishment.

Now I've just got to keep my nose clean for a while and I'll be off the hook.

Friday, September 24th

So far it's been about 35 hours and I've kept my promise to Mom about the whole "honesty" thing. It really hasn't been as bad as I thought and in fact it has been kind of liberating.

I've been in a couple situations already where I've been a lot more truthful than I would have been just a day or two ago. Like today, when Max Smedley started telling me his big plans.



And at Rowley's grandpa's birthday party...

But most people don't seem to really appreciate a person as honest as me. Let's just say I can't understood how George Washington ever got elected president.

I'm actually looking forward to tomorrow because there are a couple of teachers who could use a good dose of truthfulness.

Saturday, September 25th

I think the honesty promise has been cancelled, and not by me, but by Mom. Today I answered the phone and it was Mrs. Gretchen from the PTA, and she wanted to talk to Mom. But Mom signaled to me that I should tell Mrs. Gretchen that she wasn't home. I didn't know if it was a trick or what, but I knew that I wasn't going to go and break my honesty streak over a thing like this. So I made Mom go outside on the front porch before I would say a word to Mrs. Gretchen.

Mom didn't come right out and say the honesty deal is off, but she didn't speak to me for the rest of the night, so I figure I can just go back to how I was before.

The only other thing that happened today that's worth mentioning is that Rodrick broke his own Saturday sleeping record. At 3:30 Dad said enough is enough and made Rodrick get out of his bed in the basement.

But Rodrick just took all his sleeping gear upstairs and plopped himself on the couch until it was time for dinner.

Sunday, September 26th

Ever since Mom dangled the idea of taking away my video games, I've been trying to be on my best behavior. So you wouldn't think I could get in trouble in the fifteen minutes it takes to drive to church, but that's exactly what I did.

I was trying to have some fun with Manny by making funny faces at him in the back seat of the car. But when I finally got a laugh out of him, he spit his juice all over the car seat.

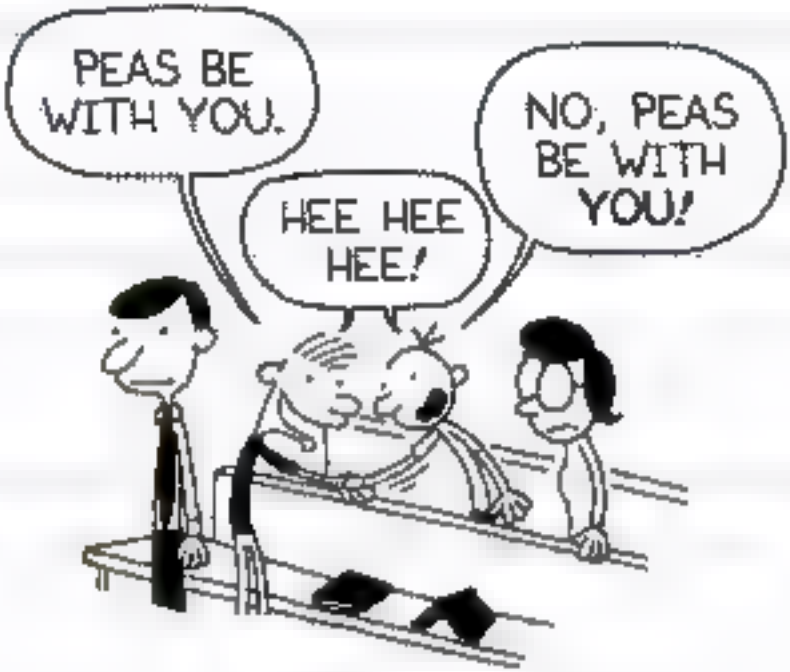
That just made Manny laugh extra hard. But then the next thing you know Mom says

Well, I guess that thought was just too much for Manny to take. All I know is that the rest of the ride was pretty miserable for everyone.

So you can see how I can go from being the hero to the goat in no time flat.

At church my old best friend Ben was sitting up front with his family. Mom doesn't let us sit too close to Ben's family because me and Ben used to always get into giggle fits when we'd sit near each other.

Our big routine was that at the part in church where you're supposed to say "Peace be with you" and shake hands, we'd say "Peas be with you" (like the vegetable).



Mom said if we didn't stop laughing in church, she was going to separate us. So we behaved ourselves for a while.

But this one Sunday during the "Peace be with you" part, Ben actually handed me a couple of dried up peas he had been carrying in his pocket, and we both totally lost it.

Mom kept good on her promise, because we haven't even sat on the same side of the church as Ben since that day.

On the way home from church we passed by the Smedleys who were out in their front yard. There are about six boys in that family but it's hard to tell any of them apart.

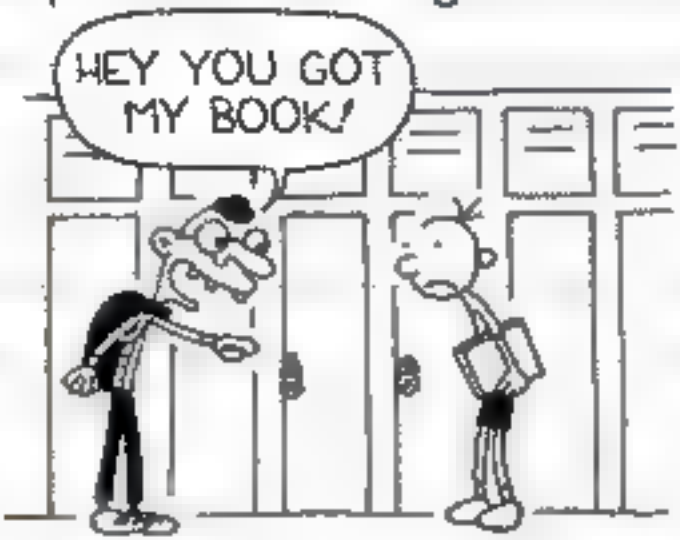
The Smedleys' big dream in life is to win the grand prize on America's Funniest Home Videos, so they're always trying to stage some kind of accident.

I bet for every ten times you see a guy get hit in the groin with a golf ball on that show, nine of them are sent in by families like the Smedleys just trying to make a buck.

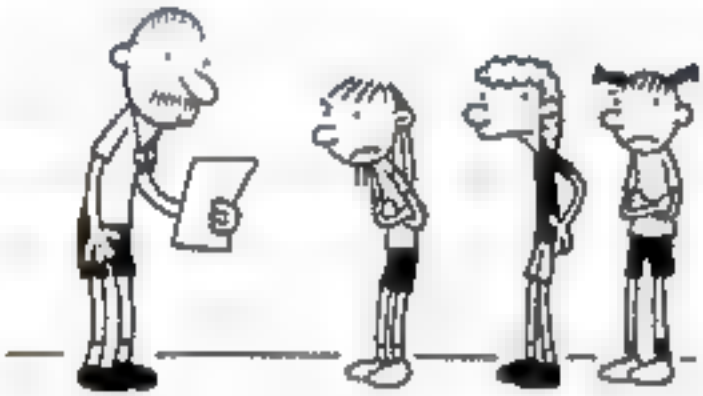
Monday, September 27th

Today at school I was looking at the inside cover of my pre-algebra book and I saw that it used to belong to Jimmy Jury, who is the most popular kid in the 8th grade. I figured I might be able to translate this into some pretty big popularity points of my own, but the problem was that Jimmy Jury didn't write his name anywhere on the outside of the book. So I took care of that detail on my own.

Unfortunately I also got Brian Gleeson's science book so things sort of evened out.



In Phys Ed today a couple girls caused a stir when they presented a petition to Mr. Underwood, the gym teacher.



The way they got the idea of writing a petition was because in History, we're studying Martin Luther who is a guy who wrote a list of demands and posted them on a church door.

So the girls got it in their heads that it was unfair that they had to do girl push-ups while the guys get to do boy push-ups, and they all signed their names to a list to protest.

If I was them, I wouldn't complain. Girl push-ups are about ten times easier than boy push-ups.

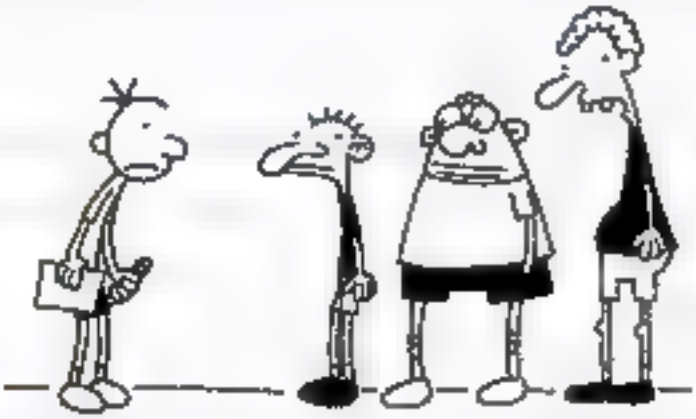
With girl push-ups, you get to keep your knees on the ground, so you only have to work half as hard.

So I think Mr. Underwood surprised them when he said sure, you girls can go ahead and do boy push-ups.

I think the girls were expecting a lot bigger fight, and now I know at least half of them wish they could take that petition back.

I kind of got inspired by the whole episode and I started to put together a petition saying we boys wanted to be allowed to do girl push-ups.

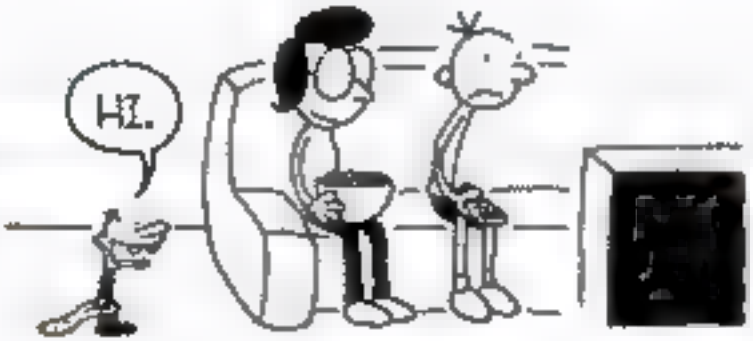
But when I saw the group of guys who was interested in signing it I decided to just bag it.



Tuesday, September 28th

Tonight was a pretty big deal for me because it was the start of the new t.v. season. I have had to watch five months of reruns so you can probably understand that I was fired up to finally see something new.

Dad put Manny to bed and Mom made popcorn and I was all set for some serious television watching. But five minutes into the first show Manny makes an appearance in the family room.



But instead of putting Manny right back to bed Mom let him stay up and watch t.v. with us.

And here's the kicker: Mom made me change the channel because on the show I was watching the kids had a "disrespectful attitude" towards the adults, and she didn't want Manny exposed to that sort of thing.

Cop shows were out, too, because of the violence. So guess what? Mom made me turn to the cartoon channel, which is exactly what Manny was watching BEFORE he went to bed.

Man, I was steamed. When I was a kid, there wasn't any of this getting out of bed and coming back downstairs stuff.

I think I did it once or twice, but Dad put a stop to it real quick.

There was this book Dad used to read to me before I went to sleep called "A Light in the Attic".

It was an awesome book but on the back of it there was a picture of the guy who wrote it, Shel Silverstein.

Have you ever seen that guy? All I can say is that he looks more like a burglar or a pirate than a guy who writes poems for kids.

Well, Dad used to leave that book right on my end table every night with the back of the book facing up, and it really gave me the heebie jeebies.

I think Dad caught on that Shel Silverstein kind of freaked me out. Because the first night after I pulled the kind of thing Manny pulled tonight, Dad read me some poems from "A Light in the Attic" and then said:

Well, Dad really had my number with that trick. I never got up again, not even to go to the bathroom. I would rather have wet the bed than to find that guy creeping around upstairs.

Wednesday, September 29th

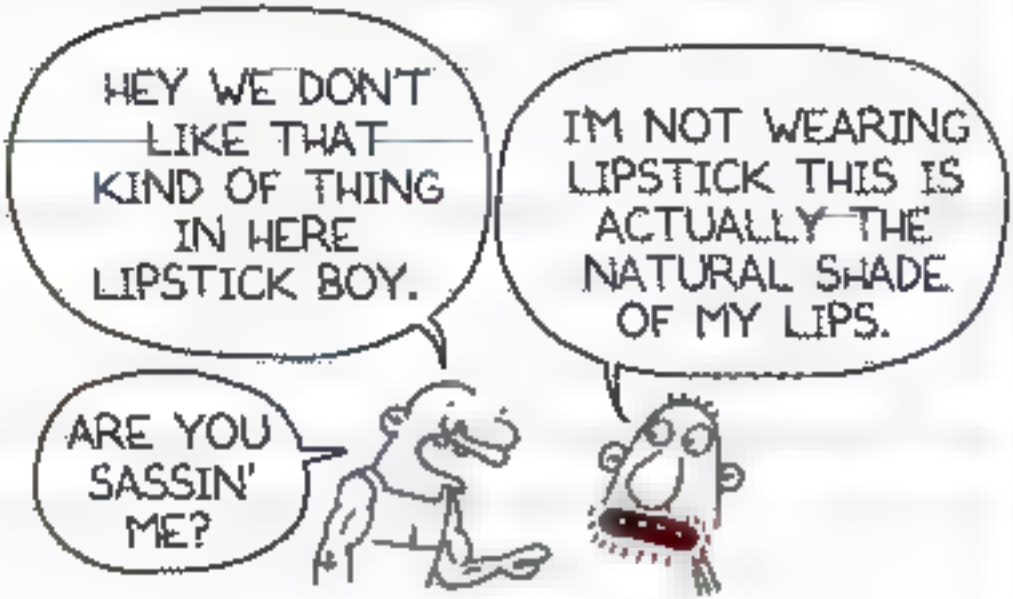
Last night Manny finally went to bed and I finally got to watch some of the new shows. But I've got to say, it wasn't worth the wait.

All the new sitcoms are the same. They basically take one lame joke and then drive it into the ground for the next 30 minutes. I wanted to see if I could write a better show than these clowns who are making thousands of dollars, so at lunch today I gave it a shot.

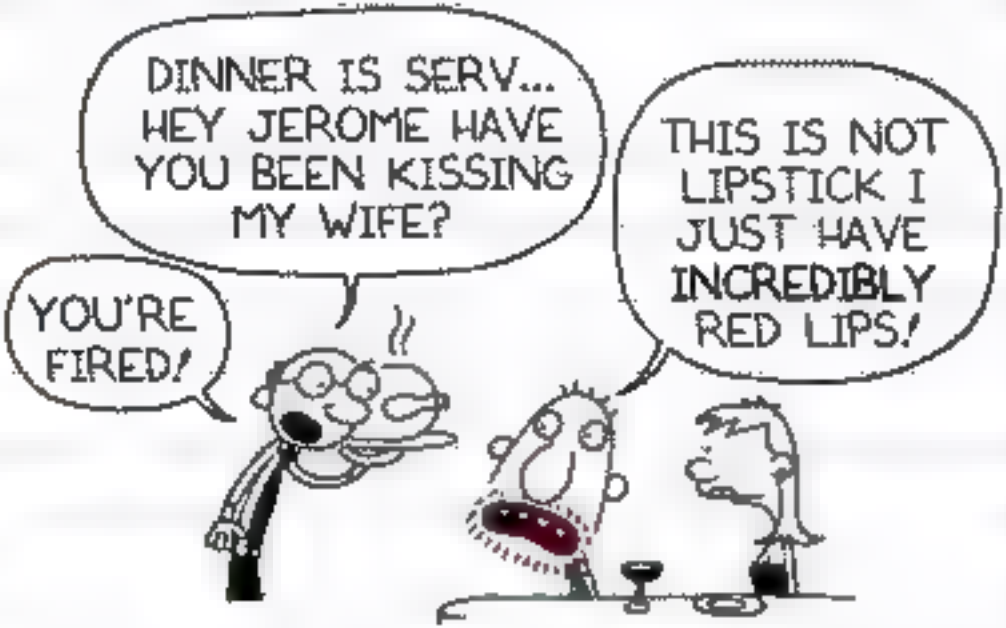
JEROME

THE MAN WITH
INCREDIBLY RED LIPS

EPISODE 1: JEROME AT THE GYM



EPISODE 2: DINNER AT THE BOSS'S HOUSE

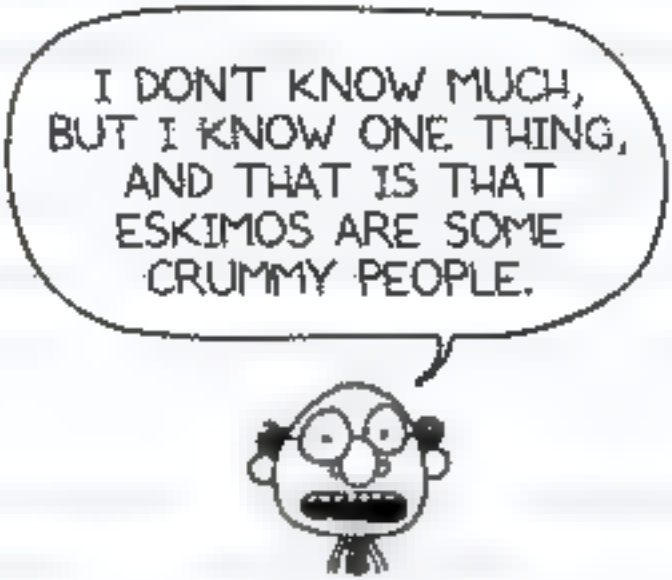


EPISODE 3: ROOMMATE RAGE

I showed my drawings to Mom and she surprised me by being really interested. She told me that if I really wanted to write a t.v. show I had to come up with a whole plot with a beginning and end. I think she was just happy I was showing an interest in something other than a video game for once.

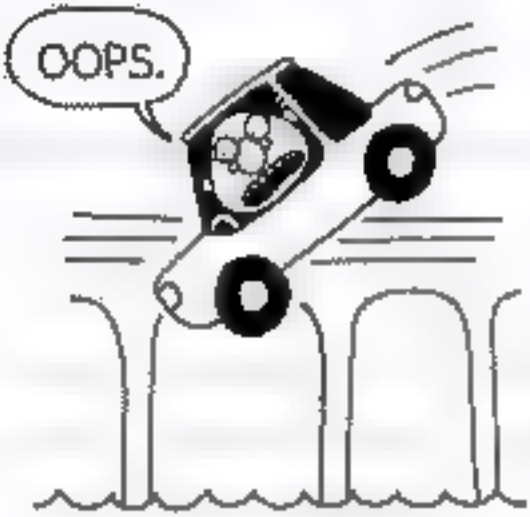
It seems like every new show that comes out nowadays is about some dad who does or says something really ignorant at the beginning of the show but then by the end of the show he comes around and realizes he was being a nincompoop. So the next show I wrote (called "Wise Up, Mr. Lockerman") is based on that kind of idea.

BEGINNING OF SHOW:



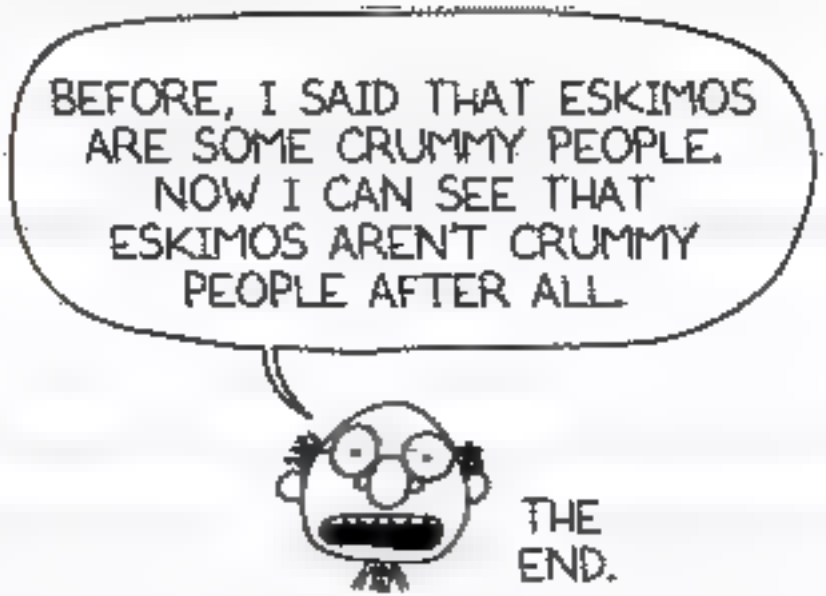
THEN...

AND ALL OF A SUDDEN...



AND THEN...

AND FINALLY...



THE END.

I showed this script to Mom when I was done. To be honest with you, I don't think she really approves of my type of humor but she is pretty excited to see me working on this stuff. Usually when Mom gets too enthusiastic about something I'm doing, that's my signal to back off. But Mom said she's going to try to get a hold of a video camera from work to let me put some of my ideas on film. So I guess I can deal with it for now.

Thursday, September 30th

Last night I was so excited about getting my hands on a video camera, I couldn't sleep. So today in school I faked like I was sick in gym so I could write down my idea for a movie.

Mom was able to get a camera from work. So I finished up the script and brought it up to Rowley's house to show him. I think it's my best stuff yet, and that's saying something.

The Boy whose family thinks he's a DOG

GET OFF THE COUCH YOU DUMB DOG!
I'M NOT A DOG I'M A PERSON!
DON'T GROWL AT ME MUTT!
OOH... LOOK HOW HE'S STANDING UP ON HIS HIND LEGS!
HOW PRECIOUS!
DAG IT I AM A HUMAN BEING!

AUNTIE LINDA IS YOUR DOGGIE PREGNANT?
NO I JUST HAVE A SLIGHT WEIGHT PROBLEM. AND PLUS I'M NOT EVEN A DOG.

WE'RE GOING TO PUT YOU IN THE KENNEL WHILE WE'RE AT DISNEY WORLD.
BUT I WANT TO GO WITH YOU GUYS!
WELL, "WOOF WOOF WOOF" TO YOU TOO!

The End.

CREDITS:

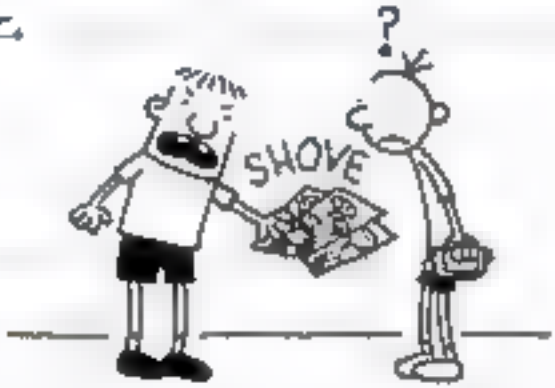
STORY BY: Greg Heffley

SCREENPLAY: Greg Heffley

DIRECTOR: Greg Heffley

DOG-BOY: Rowley Jefferson

Well, Rowley's reaction wasn't quite what I was hoping for.



You'd think Rowley would be grateful that I was going to make him a big star. And of course I got no thanks for writing juicy roles for his parents.

Friday, October 1st

Today after school I walked up to Rowley's house to show him some rewrites I did for The Boy Whose Family Thought He Was a Dog. But Rowley wouldn't answer the door.

I started to head home and then all of the sudden Mom pulls up along side me with Mackie Creavey in the back seat of the car.

Oh, man, I COMPLETELY forgot about soccer. Dad makes me do it every year so I'm "well rounded".

So I guess I've got to put my film career on hold and go get my shins kicked for a couple of months.

The first night of soccer practice is always the same. They start off by doing this "skills" test to see how good you are. Usually I don't care how I get ranked but this year the guy who was doing the testing was Mr. Matthews, who is the father of Piper Matthews, the prettiest girl in our church. So I figured I'd better do my best if I wanted to impress my future father-in-law.

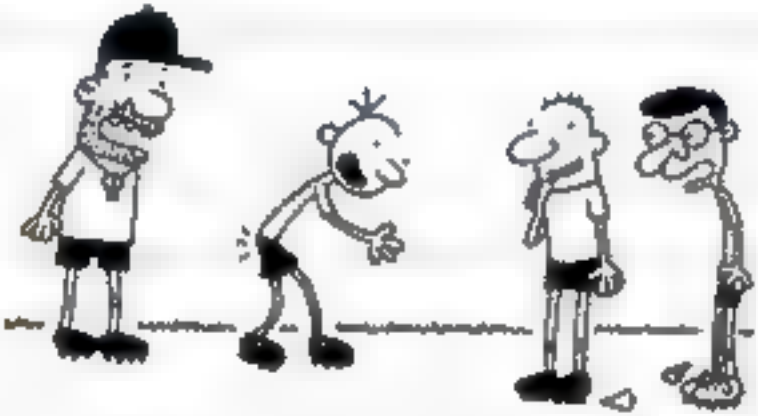
Even though I tried my hardest I still got ranked "Pre Alpha Minus" which is just adult code words for "You Stink."

The next thing they do is put everyone on a team. They basically try to spread out the really awful kids like me so no one team has too many terrible players.

And wouldn't you know my luck? I got put on Kenny Keith's team, so that means my coach is Mr. Keith, same as last year.

Mr. Keith hates me, and I trace it all back to the first day of practice last year. A bunch of us terrible players were slacking off, hanging out by the water jug, when Mr. Keith yelled for us to get back on the playing field.

So as a joke I ran backwards with my rear end pointed at Mr. Keith.



I think it would have been funnier if all the other guys had done the same thing I did, but they kind of hung me out to dry.

Anyway you can probably guess that Mr. Keith did not find my joke so amusing. And from then on he made things pretty miserable for me.

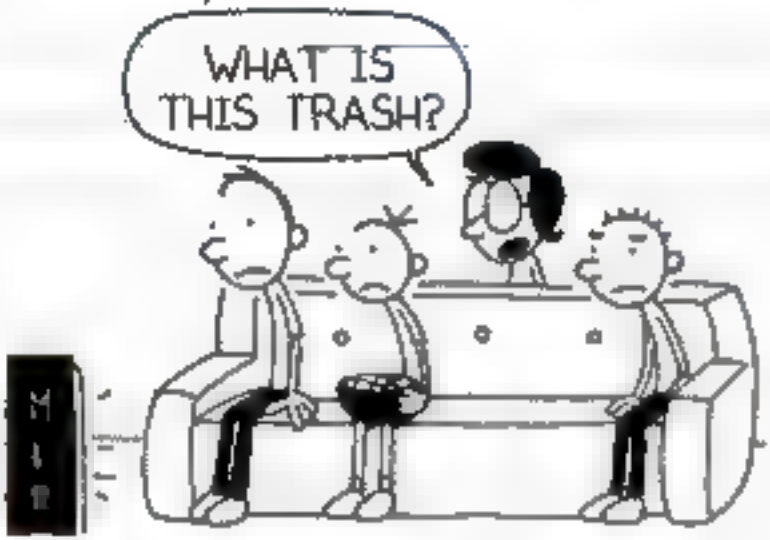
Right before the first game he gave us all our positions and he told me my position was "Shag". I didn't know a whole lot about soccer but I was pretty proud that I had my very own position. I remember bragging to Rodrick about it.

But Rodrick knew a thing or two about soccer and he told me that the Shag isn't actually a real position on the field, it's just a kid who chases all the balls that go out of bounds.

And sure enough, Rodrick was right. Mr. Keith never put me in a game, and I wasn't even the worst kid on our team. We had Collin and Mackie Creavy and a couple other kids who can barely kick a soccer ball, and there I was chasing balls into the street. And let me just say something in defense of all those Shags out there: Shag might not be the most noble position in soccer but it is definitely the most stressful.

Saturday, October 2nd

Tonight I was all set to go over to Collin's house but I found out Dad had rented a movie. So I changed my plans and stayed home. Whenever Dad gets a movie he never checks the rating, so it's always worth hanging around and seeing what he picked out. And half the time he gets something Mom would never let me watch on my own. The only down side about watching movies with Dad is that if there is ever a scene with anything the least bit inappropriate, somehow Mom shows up at the worst moment and makes you feel ashamed for watching it.

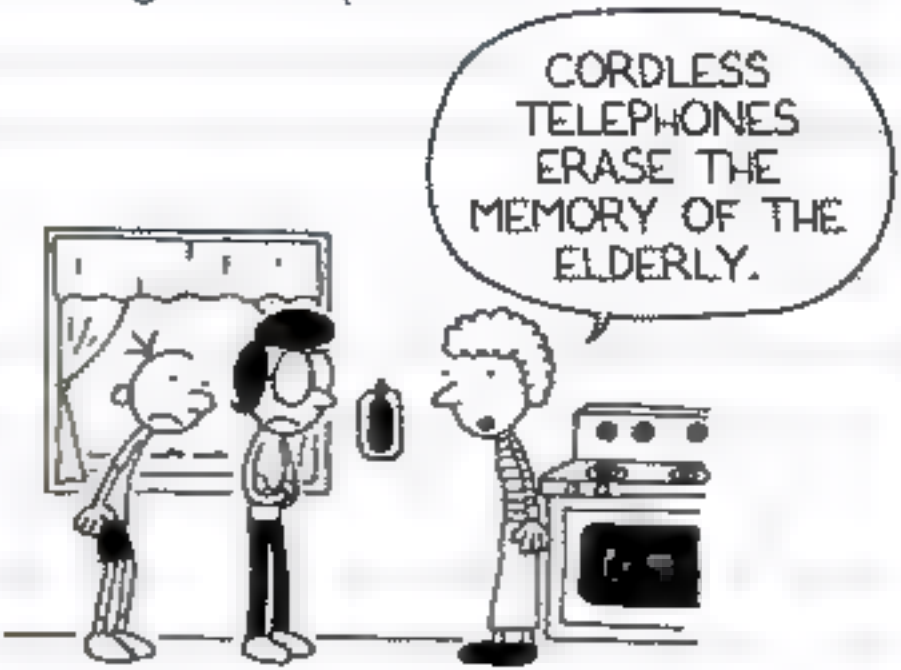


Luckily I have mastered the kind of response that gets me off the hook every time, especially during the racy scenes.

I just make sure I head back downstairs later on to catch up on anything I missed.

Sunday, October 3rd

Today after church Mom and I went over to Gramma's to check up on her. Mom was pretty worried because Gramma hasn't been answering her phone for a few days so Mom wanted to make sure Gramma was o.k. But when we got there we found Gramma sitting in her kitchen clipping coupons like usual. So when Mom asked Gramma why she hasn't been answering the telephone Gramma said:



Well, that kind of set Mom off, because she knew exactly where Gramma was getting her information: from the supermarket tabloids. Mom banned Gramma from reading those things because they always fill up her head with bad information. But somehow Gramma keeps getting a hold of these things, even though she doesn't drive.

So when Mom confronted Gramma on it and said, "Where did you read that, Mom?" Gramma knew she was cornered.

So Mom found where Gramma was stashing he tabloids and we took it home with us to throw away. What Mom doesn't know is that I always dig those things out of the trash and read them when no one's around.

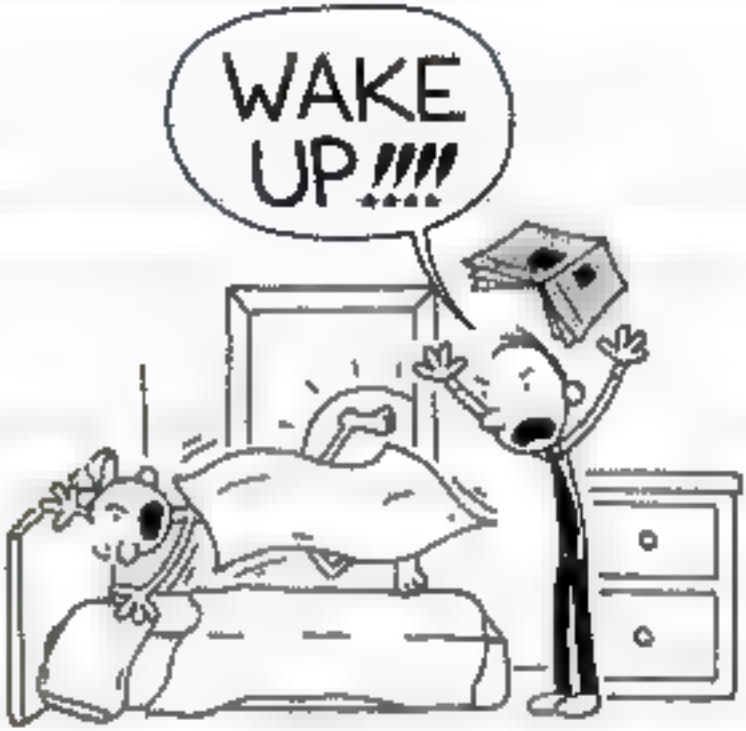
There's actually a bunch of good stuff in there, like horoscopes and predictions. In fact, the reason I take school with a grain of salt is because this one tabloid says the whole East Coast is going to be underwater within five years.

Monday, October 4th

I don't know if I ever mentioned this before, but every morning when Dad wakes me up he gives the same exact speech:

I don't know where Dad gets his morning energy but I definitely did not inheret that gene from him. After he wakes me up I prop myself up on my elbow and try my hardest not to fall back asleep.

This one day I accidentally fell back asleep after Dad woke me up, and believe me, it was the last time I ever made that mistake.

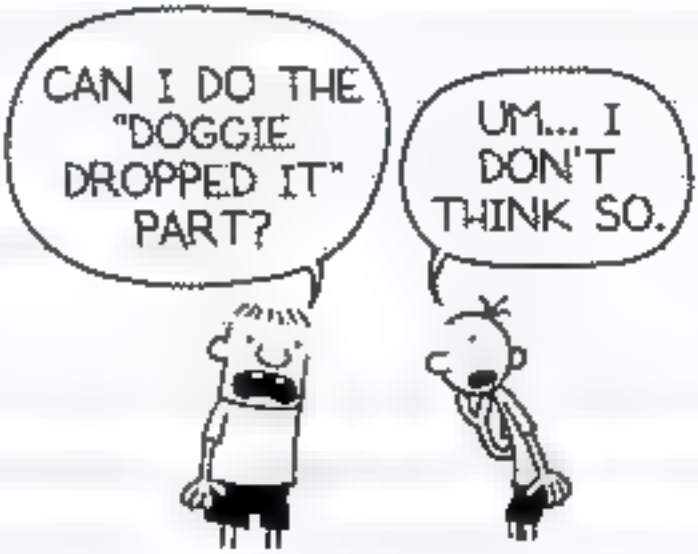


At school this morning there were a bunch of kids from Mrs. Bunn's homeroom class standing around in the hallway, tripping every other kid that walked by.

It's really sad to see what passes for comedy these days. Back in the fifth grade, me and Ben were an awesome comedy team and we had some really good routines.

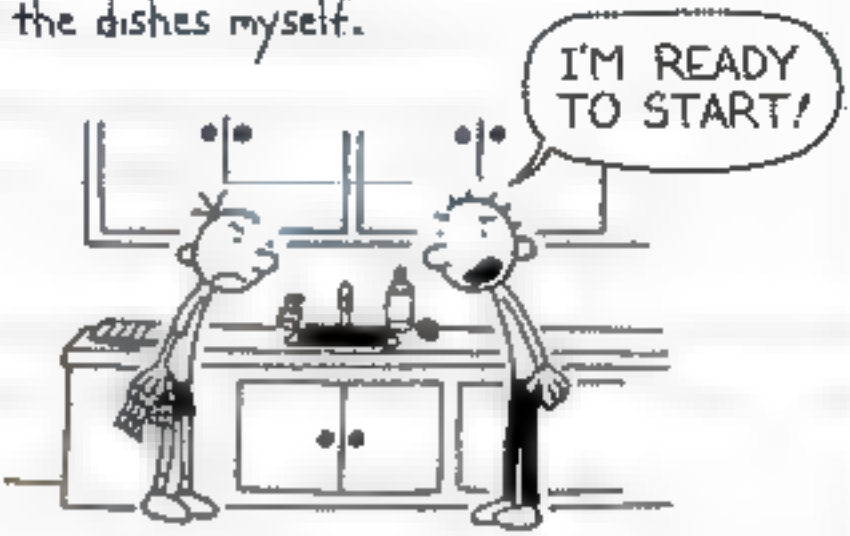
But ever since Ben left town the funniest thing that ever happens in school is when some poor kid drops his lunch tray in the cafeteria.

I tried to pick the comedy thing back up when Rowley came along, but things never really worked out.

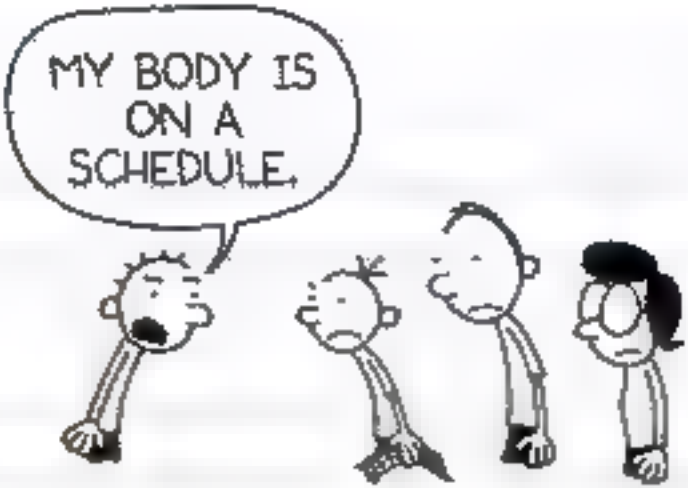


Tuesday, October 5th

I thought of another good reason to keep a journal. When I get rich and famous I can pull out this book to remind myself why I shouldn't let Rodrick swim in my pool or use my bowling alley or anything else like that. Tonight Rodrick pulled his get-out-of-doing-the-dishes routine, just like he does every night. Dad has a rule that we're not allowed to watch t.v. until the dishes are done, but right after dinner Rodrick always goes upstairs to the bathroom and doesn't come down for something like 45 minutes. By that time I've done all the dishes myself.



Well, tonight I said enough is enough, and I went to complain to Mom and Dad. But of course Rodrick had an excuse.

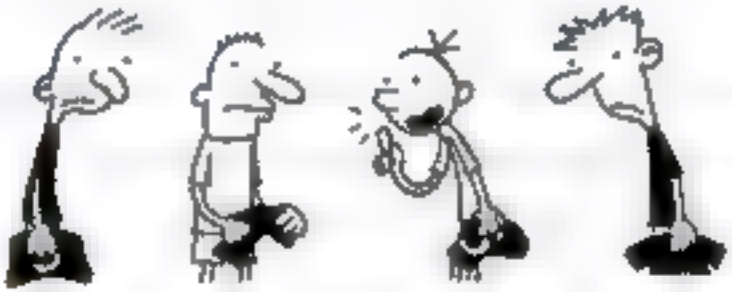


All I can say is that if Rodrick wants to hang out in my mansion when we're grown up, he better bring a towel and some sponges because he's going to be doing a whole lot of dishes.

Wednesday, October 6th

Tonight soccer practice ended a few minutes early so the coach could hand out uniforms and we could come up with a team name.

I suggested "Twisted Wizards" and said maybe we could get the Game Zone to sponsor us, but of course my perfectly good idea got shot down.



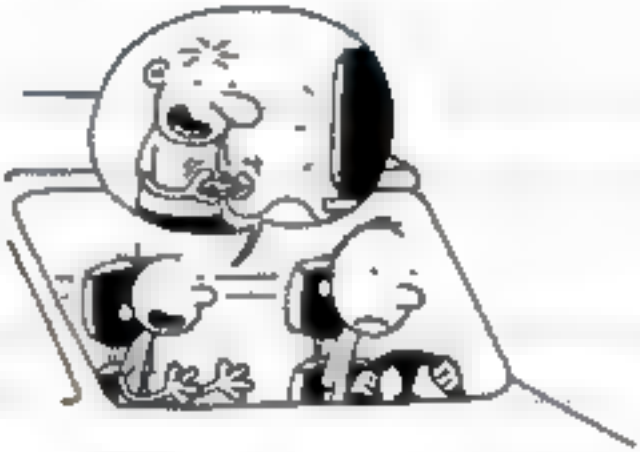
A bunch of other ideas got tossed around until some idiot came up with the name "Red Sox." I couldn't believe it when a bunch of kids thought that was a really good idea. And guess what? That's what everyone voted on.

Now, number one, the Red Sox is a baseball team, not a soccer team. And number two, our uniforms are blue, including the socks. But of course nobody would listen to me.

And what's even dumber about our name is that the coach decided we'd better spell it Red "Socks" instead of Sox because he was afraid we might get sued. Like the real Red Sox have nothing better to do than to go around suing a bunch of seventh-grade soccer teams.

When Dad picked me up I decided to take a stab at getting him to let me quit soccer. I told him about Albert Sandy, who quit on the first day, and how Albert's dad can just read the newspaper instead of having to drive to the soccer field to pick him up every day.

I think I had Dad's interest for a while until I mentioned that now, Albert Sandy can just relax and play video games instead of having to do leg lifts and wind sprints all afternoon.



I think I pushed it a little too far, because the next thing I knew Dad was saying:

Which isn't really true at all. I'm a HUGE quitter, and so is Rodrick for that matter.

And I'm sure Manny will carry on in the Heffley boy tradition of quitting, too, but he hasn't been around long enough to quit anything big.

Anyway I figured the conversation was over, and I just kept my mouth shut for the rest of the ride home. So if I'm going to convince Dad to let me quit soccer, I'm going to have to come at it from a different angle.

Thursday, October 7th

When I got home from soccer last night and saw what was waiting for me in my room, I just about went through the roof.

Manny had somehow gotten hold of my Walkman, which he totally destroyed by stuffing it with brownies or cookies or something. But when I made Manny explain himself he used the same lame excuse he always uses after he destroys one of my things:

What really steamed me was that my Walkman was all the way at the top of my closet in a toolbox that was locked. I put it up there because I figured Manny would break it if he ever found it. Don't even ask me how Manny got to it.

Mom surprised me by saying she was going to have a "talk" with Manny downstairs. Like I said before, Manny has never gotten punished for ANYTHING, so I didn't have real high hopes. But after about 20 minutes Mom and Manny showed up at my door, and Manny was holding something in his hands.

It took me a minute to realize that whatever this thing Manny was holding was supposed to somehow make up for my hundred dollar Walkman he just destroyed.

The thing was basically a ball of tinfoil with a bunch of toothpicks stuck through it, and it looked like some kind of weapon.

At first I thought it must be some kind of joke but from the look on Mom's face she seemed to think it was a fair trade. So of course after Manny left the room I went to throw the thing out, but Mom stopped me before I could.

So now instead of a Walkman I've got this toothpick ball in my room.

And mark my words: one of these days I'm going to step on the stupid thing.

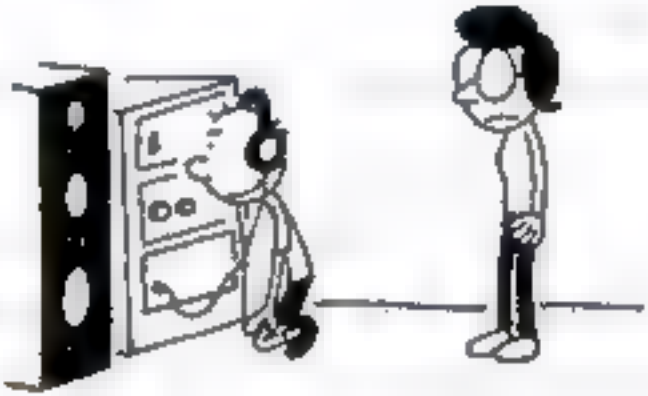
Friday, October 8th

After dinner tonight Rodrick was listening to some of his rock music on the stereo in the family room. Mom likes just about every kind of music, so when she heard it she came in and started dancing.

That really ticked Rodrick off, and he told her to cut it out. And Mom said, "What, I'm not allowed to enjoy music in my own house?"

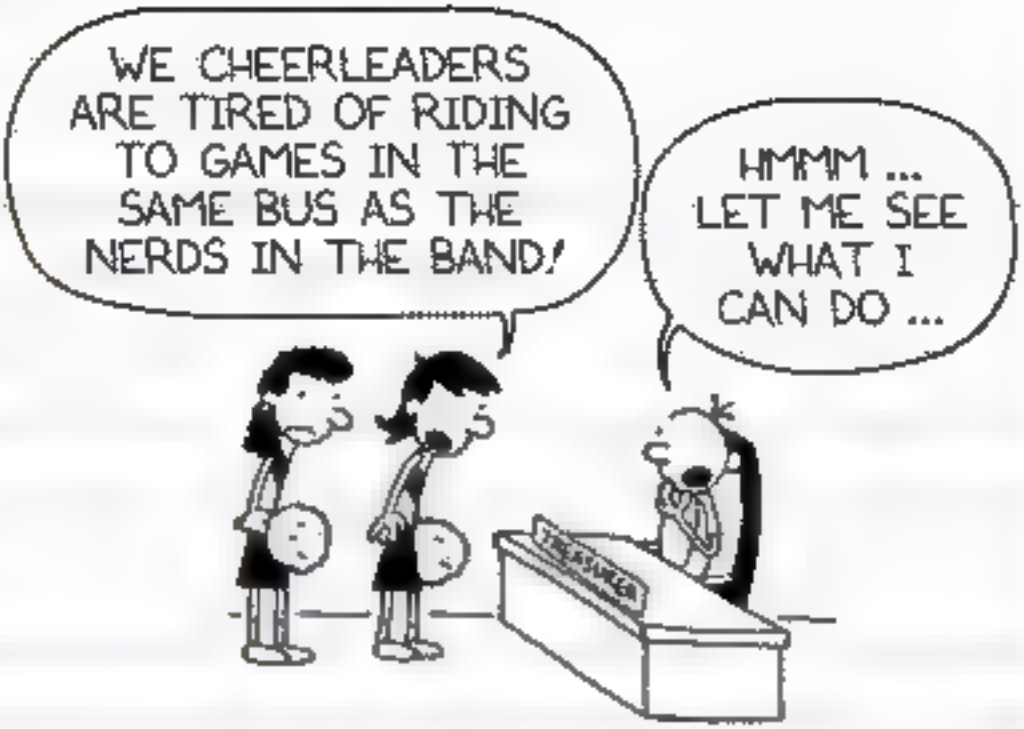
Rodrick just got up and took off in his car. But he was back 15 minutes later with a pair of giant headphones.

And I guess that just about settled that.



At school today they announced that student government elections were coming up, and that anyone who wanted to run for office had to submit their application by 3:00 p.m. on Tuesday.

To be honest with you I've never really had any kind of an interest in running for student government. But when they mentioned the position of Treasurer I got to thinking about the possibilities.


WE CHEERLEADERS ARE TIRED OF RIDING TO GAMES IN THE SAME BUS AS THE NERDS IN THE BAND!
HMMM ... LET ME SEE WHAT I CAN DO ...

And then I thought, even better...

Nobody ever wants to be treasurer, because all anybody cares about are the big jobs like president and vice president. So I figure the job is mine for the taking when I sign up for it on Tuesday.

Saturday, October 9th

Have you ever seen a sports game where the coach calls a huddle during a time out, and everyone gathers around him to hear his game plan? You probably noticed that the guys who ride the bench gather around, too, even though they will never get in the game. And if you ever wondered what those bench guys are thinking in the huddle, I can tell you first hand:

Today was our first soccer game, and just like I expected, I didn't play a single second.

Dad gave me this big pep talk before the game about giving 110% and all of that, which shows that he doesn't understand the only running around I'd be doing was dodging traffic to chase down a ball that was kicked out of bounds.

Anyway, if you want to know, we won our first game against Green Thunder 13-0. I think it's a combination of the fact that the league accidentally stacked our team with too many good kids, and Mr. Keith kept all the bad players on the bench.

The only other comment I want to make is that Tommy Leonard's dad is a cheapskate. He bought generic cola for the halftime drink and couldn't even spring for a name brand.

Sunday, October 10th

Today was a pretty big day for me because the Matthews family showed up at church, and we sat three rows behind them.

There are four girls in the Matthews family, and each one of them is the prettiest girl in her grade. And the prettiest Matthews girl of all is Piper, who is in the seventh grade, same as me.

Dad is always knocking Mr. Matthews, saying that if he had a hundred more kids, they'd all be girls. All I can say is that if he did have a hundred more kids, the world would be a much more attractive place.

The only down side of Piper Matthews is that she goes to St. Patrick's, and not my middle school.

I always try to think of ways I could suggest to her that she should transfer, but since I have never even talked to her it might be a kind of awkward thing to lead off with.

What really burns me up is that Ben, my old best friend, also goes to St. Patrick's, and he sits right next to Piper Matthews all day long, probably telling her all sorts of jokes he stole from me.

So I'm not too thrilled Ben is spending all his time being "reading partners" with my future wife.

All I can say is if I ever find out he's been using my jokes without giving me any credit, I'll make sure to shut him out later on.

Even though I was happy to see Piper Matthews, church kind of went on and on today. They have this new music director that stretches every song to six or seven verses.

Manny is lucky. Mom and Dad bring all this gear to keep him occupied during church, which they never did for me as a kid.

So today, I tried to pass the time by counting the number of moles on Mr. Fisher's neck, who was standing right in front of me. He kept moving around so I kept having to start over.

It might not be the most entertaining option, but it beats the heck out of Rodrick's strategy, which is to pick at this scab on his hand that he never lets heal.

Monday, October 11th

Today was awesome... there was NO SCHOOL, which was a total surprise to me. I don't keep up with school holidays or that kind of thing, so sometimes my cluelessness is a real bonus.

Of course it would have been nice if Rodrick mentioned it was Columbus Day before I headed out to the bus stop this morning.

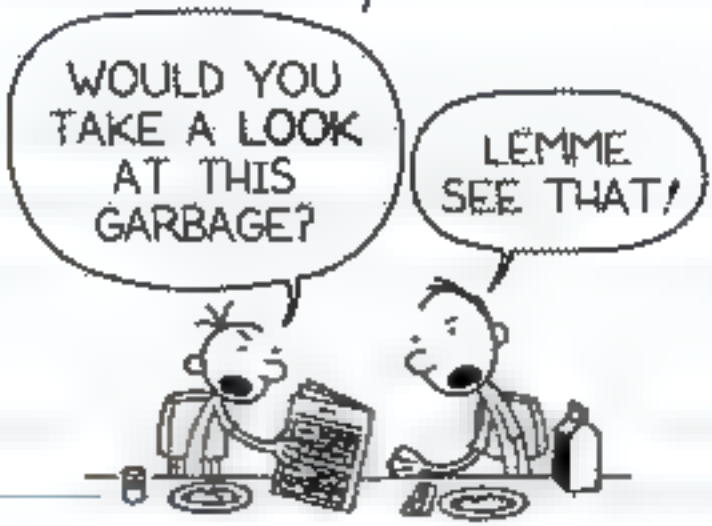
But even though I wasted an hour and a half standing around, it didn't spoil my mood once I figured out what was up.

I spent the rest of my morning relaxing and reading the newspaper. Dad had the day off, too, so we split up the comics section.

If there's one thing me and Dad have in common, it's that we both think "Little Cutie" is the worst comic ever written. Today's comic was pretty typical.

"Mommy, is the rain just God sweating?"

In fact, sometimes I think the only reason we read the comics is to see how mad Little Cutie is going to make us that day.



Dad has written to the paper a bunch of times to try to make them cancel Little Cutie, but they don't listen to him. I heard that the editors tried to cancel Little Cutie about ten years ago, but a million old ladies threatened to cancel their subscriptions if they didn't bring it back. So I think it's here to stay.

There are a bunch of other things that really get under Dad's skin, but the thing that irks him the most are those Peachy Breeze ice cream commercials on t.v. I don't know if it's the kid in the commercial or the way he says the motto, but whenever it comes on t.v. it stops Dad in his tracks.

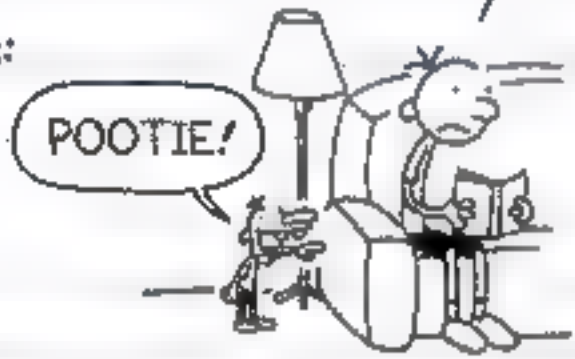
And Dad will always stop whatever he's doing and write an angry letter to the television station.

One time Dad wrote an angry letter directly to Peachy Breeze, saying how he would never in a million years eat their ice cream because of how much he hates their commercials.

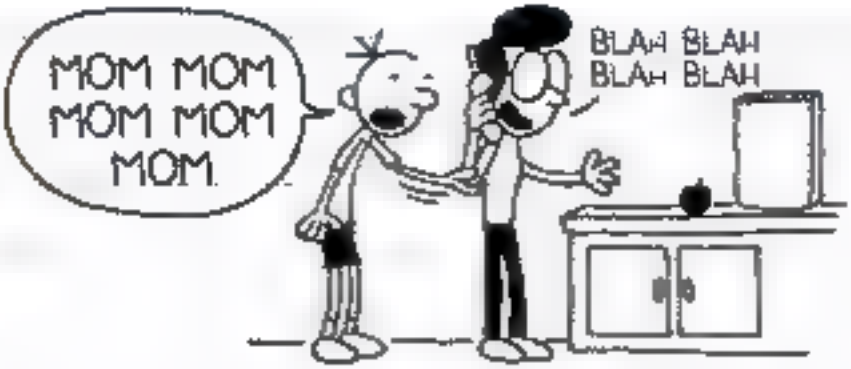
But the way they responded was by just sending him coupons for two free quarts of Peachy Breeze ice cream.

Tuesday, October 12th

After school I was just sitting on the couch minding my own business when Manny comes up to me and says:



I didn't know if Pootie was some kind of little kid cuss word or if it was something Manny just made up, but I didn't like the sound of it. So I went to Mom to see if she knew anything. Unfortunately Mom was on the phone, and when she's talking, it's impossible to get her attention.



When I finally got got her to stop talking for a second, she was royally ticked off at me for interrupting her.

She asked me what was so important that I needed to talk to her right now. So I told her Manny called me a Pootie.

And Mom said:

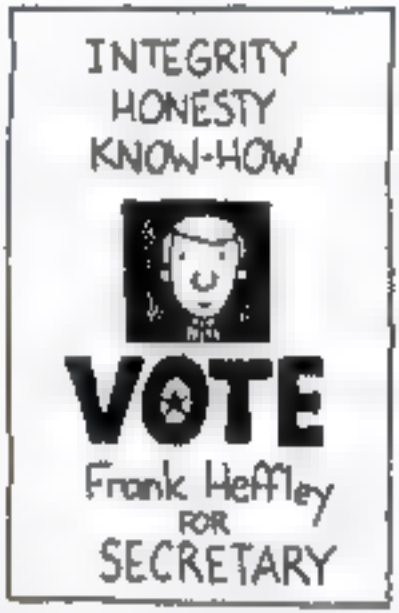
Which kind of threw me off guard, because it was the question I was trying to ask her. Mom went back to her conversation and I just headed back to the living room.

Unfortunately Manny was there to see Mom's reaction, so now he knows he pretty much has a free pass to use that word whenever he wants.

Tonight after dinner I was telling Dad how I signed up to run for treasurer, and he seemed pretty interested. I told him how Marty Porter is going to run against me, and how Marty is real brainy at math, so he is going to be hard to beat.

That got Dad to thinking, and he told Rodrick to do the dishes by himself while he showed me something downstairs.

It turns out Dad actually ran for student government when he was my age. He showed me these posters he put together and told me how they actually helped him win.



I thought the poster thing was a pretty good idea, so Dad took me out and got me some paper and magic markers. I was up late drawing them and I'm pretty excited to put them up in school tomorrow.

Wednesday, October 13th

This morning when I woke up it was raining, so I had to wrap all my campaign posters in garbage bags to make sure the magic marker didn't run.

As soon as I got to school, I put the posters up in the main hallway.

Remember in second grade how Marty Porter had head lice?

ITCH
ITCH

Do you really want him touching YOUR money?

Unfortunately my posters only stayed up for a total of about five minutes before Mr. Roy, the Vice Principal, made me take them down.

Mr. Roy said you weren't allowed to put up "fabrications" about other candidates so he was going to have to confiscate my campaign posters.

I told Mr. Roy that the thing about the head lice was true and how it practically closed down the whole school when it happened. But he didn't seem to want to hear about it.

So now Marty is going around handing out lollipops to buy himself votes while my posters are sitting at the bottom of Mr. Roy's trash can.

Today didn't get any better after that. I found out from Mom that Dad couldn't pick me up after soccer, so I had to get a ride home from Mr. Keith, who hates my guts.

After practice Mr. Keith was sitting on the hood of his car yakking away to his assistant coach and I was stuck in the car with his kid Kenny.

Kenny was in the front seat and I was in the back. Kenny asked me if I'd change the radio station, and I thought, "Why don't you just do it yourself since you're sitting right there?" But because I'm a nice guy I leaned over the front seat to change the radio station.

But right when I was all the way forward, Kenny honked the horn, and it totally looked like I was the one who did it.

Well, you can probably imagine that Mr. Keith wasn't real happy with me. So to get me back he talked to Mr. Mooney for another half hour.

And instead of taking me straight home, he went to Home Depot and I had to wait in the car with Kenny for 45 minutes.

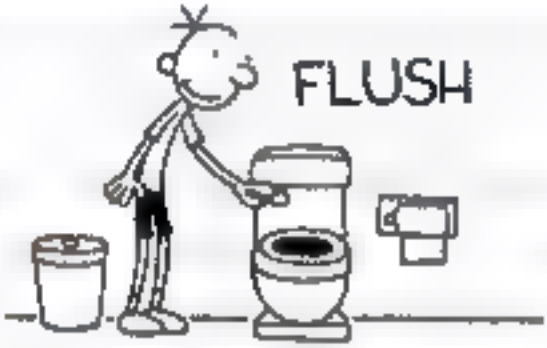
And guess what? Kenny was mad at ME because he was missing his favorite t.v. show. So if you ever wanted to know the reason I hate team sports and kids my age in general, there you have it in a nutshell.

Thursday, October 14th

A couple days ago I predicted I was going to step on Manny's spiky toothpick tinfoil ball.

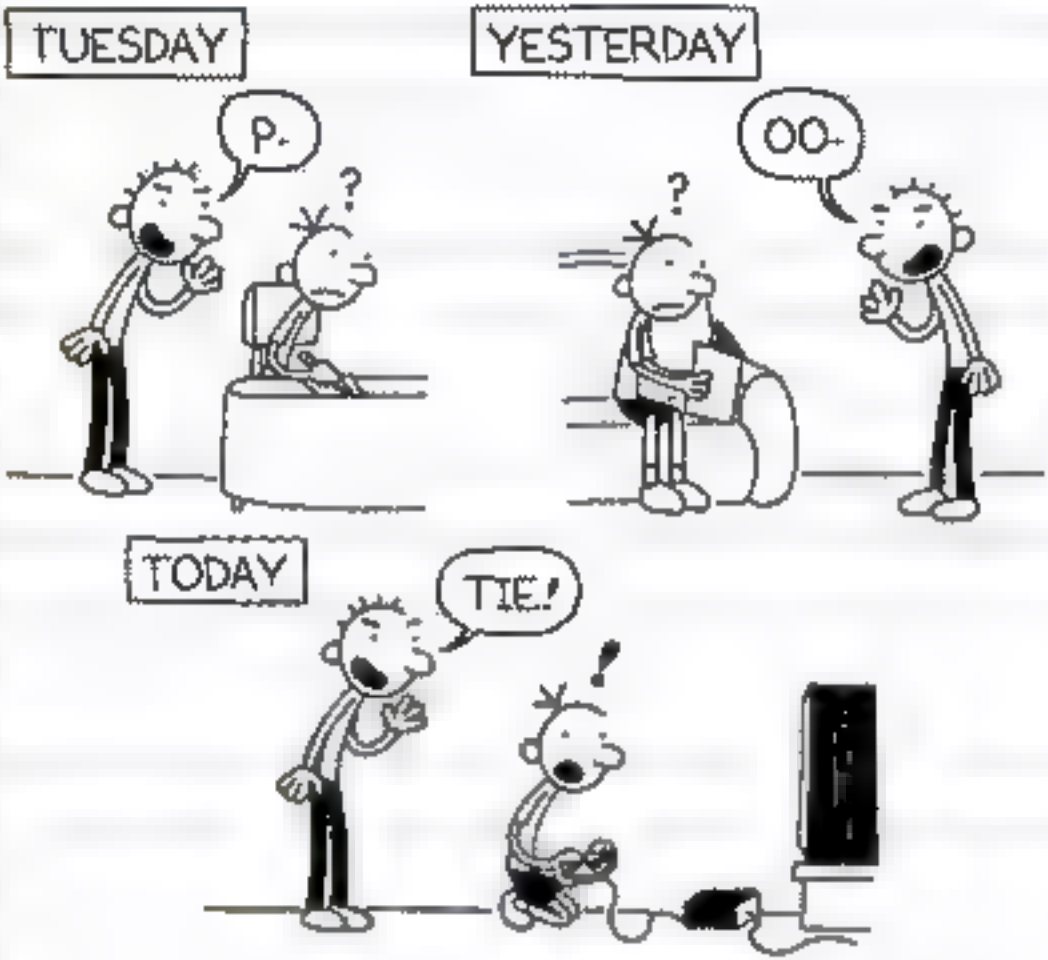
Well, it didn't happen exactly the way I thought it would. But the only detail I got wrong was that it ended up in the seat of Rowley's pants instead of my foot.

I had lost track of the thing so I was actually a little relieved when it showed up again. And in all the commotion of Rowley crying and Mom trying to dab hydrogen peroxide on his rear end, I was finally able to get rid of the stupid thing.



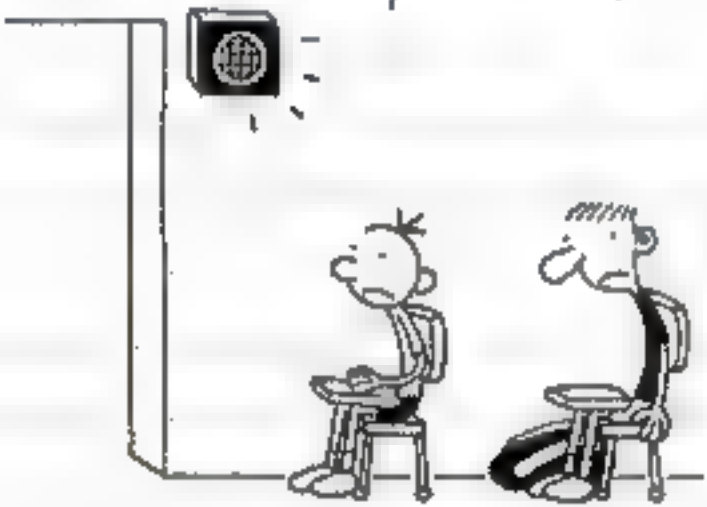
At least now I can start walking around my room in my socks again.

Rodrick has really been pushing my buttons lately. He found out that it bothers me when Manny calls me "Pootie", so of course Rodrick started doing it, too. I got Dad to tell Rodrick he's not allowed to call me that word, but if there's a loophole, Rodrick is always going to find it.



Friday, October 15th

Today during home room, Vice Principal Roy made an announcement that there will be "no negative campaigns" in the student elections, so I guess my political career is officially washed up.



It doesn't really matter since I found out yesterday that student council meetings are held during recess. What kind of fool made that rule? That's a pretty good way to guarantee that all your student council members are nerds. Then again, that's probably what the teachers were hoping for when they set it up that way.

Saturday, October 16th

I actually thought of one good thing about having soccer games on Saturdays: I won't have to be in the house for any of Rodrick's band practices.

This summer, Rodrick decided to start a band, so he hit Mom and Dad up for money to buy an instrument. Rodrick wanted an electric guitar but Dad talked him into drums because a neighbor was selling a used set cheap. So Dad was patting himself on the back for saving a few bucks, but Mom burst his bubble by telling him that band practice is always held at the drummer's house because it's too hard to move a drum set around.

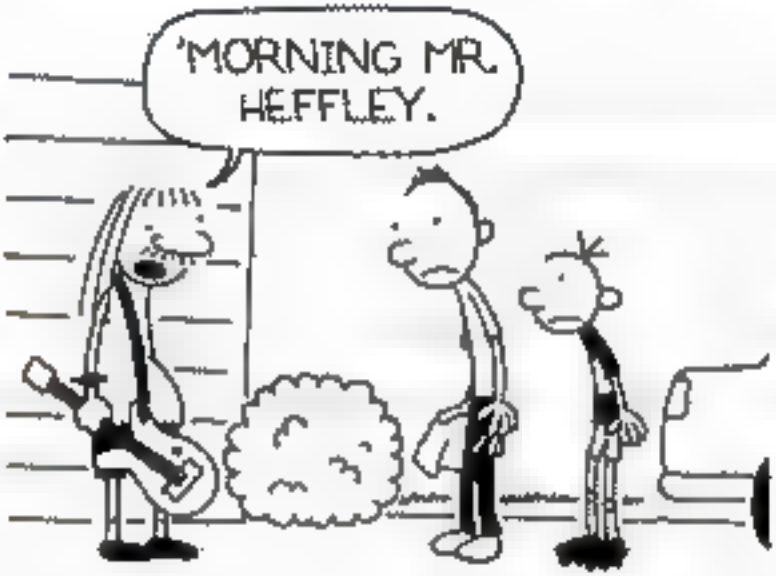
I have never seen Dad as depressed as he was that week.

I guess the thought of having a basement full of teenagers just about sent Dad over the edge.

Mom was pretty up on the idea of Rodrick starting a band. I think she has this idea that we can all learn instruments and then become one of those family bands like you see on t.v.

Today right when we were heading out to my soccer game a couple of the guys from Rodrick's band showed up for practice.

One of Rodrick's band-mates is this guy named Bill, who is about 32 years old. So he doesn't exactly fall into dad's "arch enemy" category of teenager, but that doesn't mean Dad has to like him.



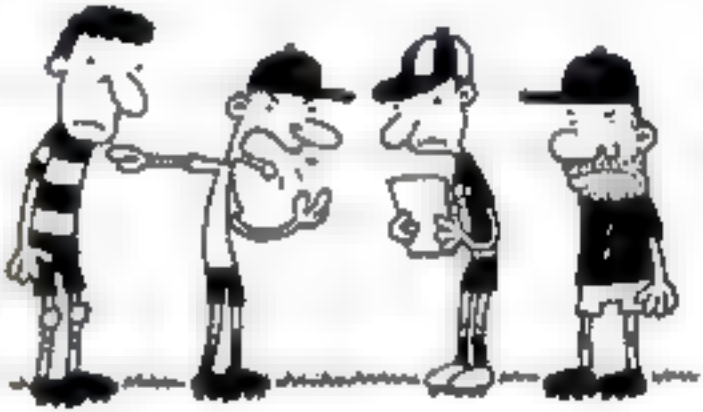
The only reason I can figure Rodrick invited Bill to be in his band is because Bill was named "Most Likely to Be a Rock Star" in his senior year of high school. Plus Bill has a van, so if they ever get hired to do a show I guess Bill can drive them around.

The name of Rodrick's band is "Loaded Diaper," only it's spelled "Loded Diper" on the side of Bill's van. You might think that they spelled the words wrong to make it look cooler, but I bet if you told Bill how you're really supposed to spell "Loaded Diaper" it would be news to him.

Anyway I'm starting to think that maybe the whole reason Dad is into my soccer games this season is because of Rodrick's band practices. I always wondered why we get to the games an hour early, but now I'm starting to catch on.

Today's game started just like it did last week, with the coach of the other team accusing our goalie, Ian, of being too old to play in our league.

They went through the whole routine with the birth certificate and all of that, which took about 20 minutes.



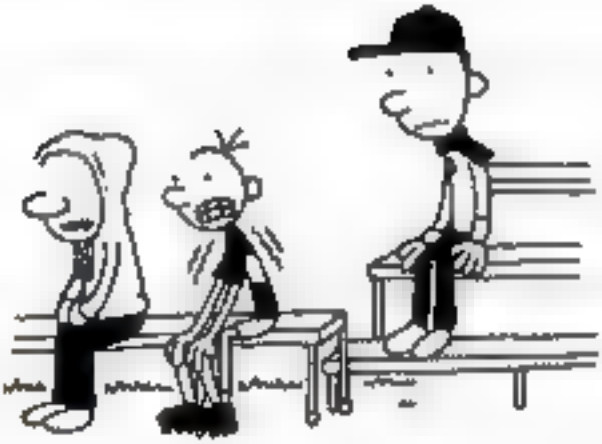
I admit the guy's a giant, but if they're going to start every game late I wish they'd tell us so we could at least go out and get Slurpees or something.

Plus, it didn't matter anyway. We were ahead, 9-0 at half time and the ball never made it down to Ian's part of the field.

It started to get cold, so during the game, I wanted to get my jacket from the car. But Dad said he wanted me to "tough out" the cold and be prepared in case the coach wanted to put me in the game.

I wanted to tell Dad that the only time I would be stepping foot on the field would be when the coach told me to collect all the other kids' orange peels at half time.

But I kept my mouth shut and just did my best to keep my shinguards from freezing to my shins,



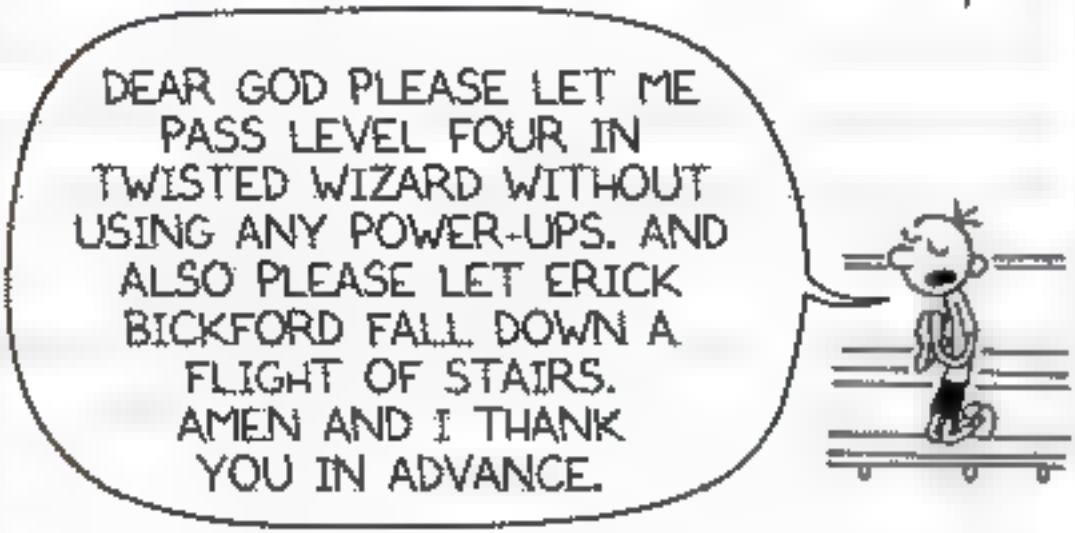
After the game the team went to McDonald's to celebrate. I got up to go to the bathroom and when I came back, all 10 of my Chicken McNuggets were missing. But then Erick Bickford dumped all of my McNuggets back on to my plate from his big sweaty hands.

So needless to say, none of those McNuggets touched my lips. And that's just another strike against my soccer team.

Sunday, October 17th

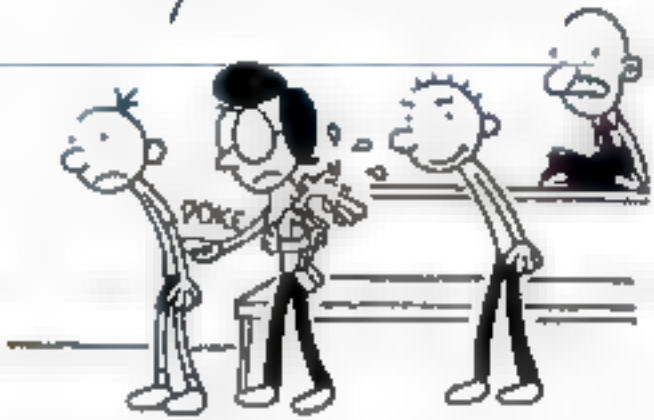
I think Gramma has a direct pipeline to God, because whatever she asks for, she gets.

I don't think I have the same kind of connection Gramma has but that doesn't stop me from trying.



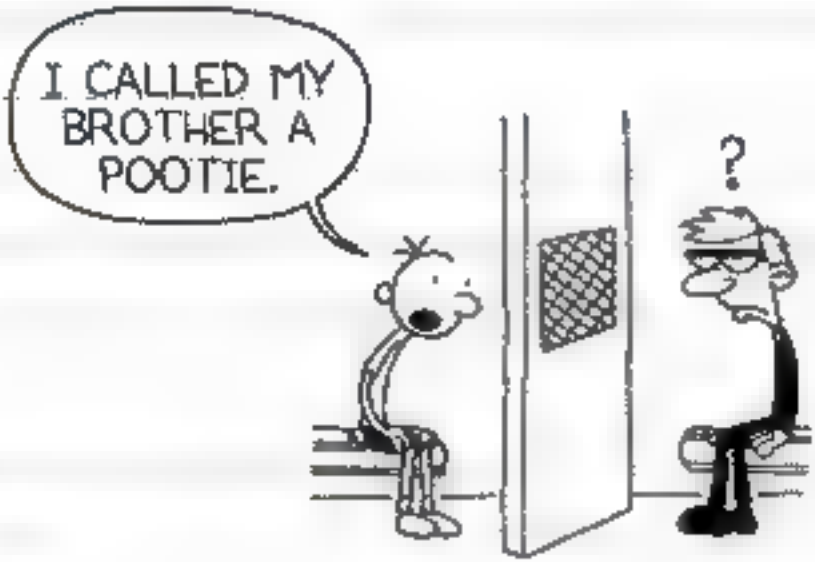
Today at church the music was going on and on again, and I was looking for ways to keep myself entertained. So this thought popped into my head, and just for fun I leaned over to Manny and said:

Well, that did it. Manny started bawling his head off and we actually had to leave church because of it.



I noticed the Matthews girls were there, so I tried to look as cool as possible walking out, which was really hard to do with Mom's finger in my ribcage. And Rodrick tagged along because he knew a chance to leave church early when he saw it.

Mom made me go to confession after church ended, which was pretty embarassing. But I was just glad to get my punishment over with.



Monday, October 18th

Yesterday, Mom didn't actually let me off the hook right away for calling Manny a Pootie. She told me I had to apologize to him for calling him a "bad word."

Now, if I remember things correctly, Mom didn't seem to think it was a bad word last week.

But to get Mom off my back, I apologized to Manny, and he said:

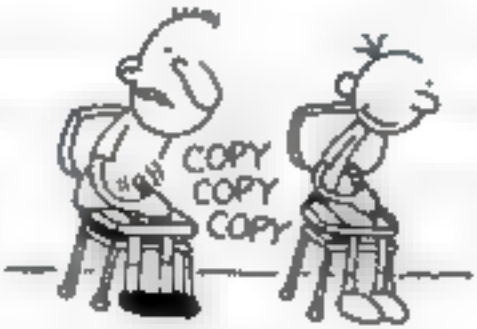
Mom just conveniently ignored that one.

Tuesday, October 19th

Last week we had a History test, and I actually studied for it.

I noticed this kid named Dwight Harrington was copying off of me during the test. I wouldn't have cared all that much, but right before the test, he had thrown a pencil eraser across the room and it landed in my ear.

So during the test I wrote down all the wrong answers on purpose and made sure Dwight could see my paper.



Then at the last second I changed all my answers to the right ones and handed in my test.

So today when we got our tests back, I got a "B-." But the teacher pulled Dwight aside and told him that he would be transferring to Mrs. Bunn's class, where all the kids who get held back are, for the rest of the year.

I just hope Dwight never finds out about the trick I pulled. Because if he does, I'll have a lot more to worry about than a pencil eraser in my ear.

Tomorrow we have student council elections, and I'm pretty freaked out about it. I forgot to officially drop out of the race, and Mr. Roy won't let me take my name off the ballot for the election. So if I actually win this thing, I'm going to have to spend all my recesses inside for student council meetings. I'm trying to figure out a way to make sure that doesn't happen.

Wednesday, October 20th

Today we had elections in the morning and at the end of the day they announced the winners.

Musti Patel won Treasurer, which was a big relief for me. That head lice issue had actually started to make the rounds again and I was afraid I might get elected by default.

So I dropped some comments in the hallway yesterday before the elections, and that seemed to be enough to do the trick.

Thursday, October 21st

Did I ever mention how Bryce Anderson is always doing something to make the rest of us neighborhood kids look bad? Well, last night, he did it again.

Bryce set up some kind of restaurant on his deck, where him and his cronies invited all the neighborhood parents and charged $20 a head.

Mom and Dad came back oohing and ahhing over their meal. And from the sound of it, Bryce and his crew must have cleared $200 in tips alone.

All I have to say is, if I didn't have to do soccer practice every night, then maybe I'd have an outdoor restaurant, too.

Dad has been in a pretty good mood lately, and I think it's because Halloween is coming. Nobody likes Halloween as much as Dad does.

On Halloween night, while all the other parents are handing out candy, Dad hides in the bushes with a big trash can full of water. And if any teenagers pass by our driveway, he decks them.

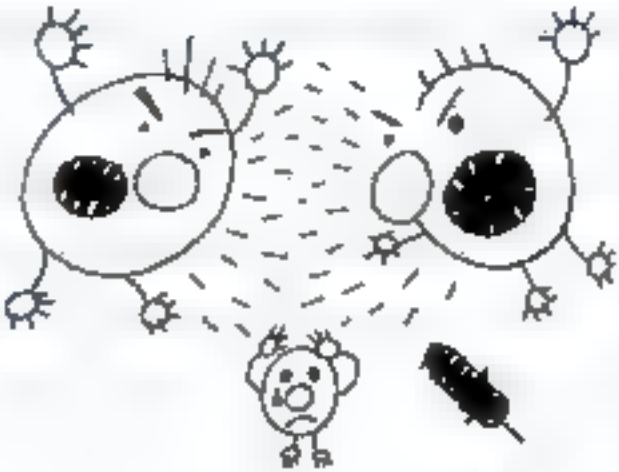
I don't think Dad really understands the concept of Halloween, but I'm not gonna be the one to spoil his fun.

Friday, October 22nd

Mom and Dad have been acting real strange ever since they got back home from Parents' Night at Manny's day care.

At first, I couldn't tell why they were being so mushy, especially around Manny. But when I found one of Manny's drawings in the trash can in Mom and Dad's room I put two and two together.

It turns out that Manny drew a picture at day care, and it was up on the wall for everyone to see at Parents' Night.



One of the teachers had labeled the picture "Unhappy Home," and I guess Mom and Dad were pretty freaked out.

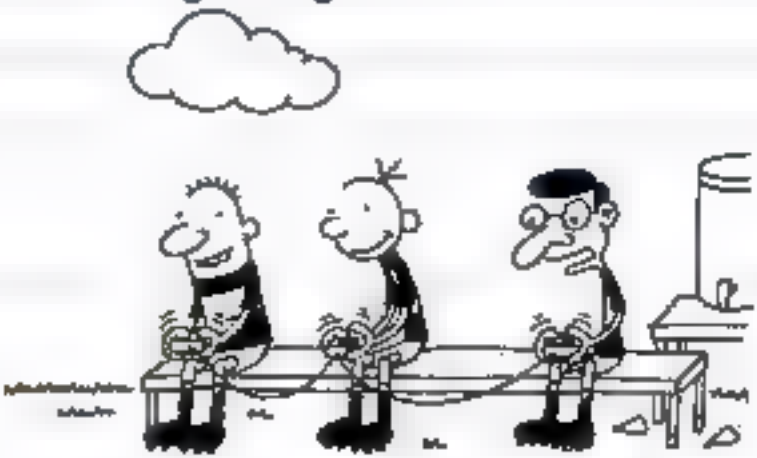
The funny thing is, I recognized the picture right away. It's actually supposed to be of me and Rodrick, not Mom and Dad. Me and Rodrick got in a yelling fight the other day over who should get the last pudding pop, and Manny started crying. But Mom and Dad don't need to know that, so I think I'll just keep quiet about this one.

Saturday, October 23rd

Today we had another soccer game, but this one was different. For the very first time, Mr. Keith put me in the game.

Some parent had complained that his kid wasn't getting to play, so now there's a new rule that EVERY kid has to get in the game at some point.

It's a real pity, too, because me and the other bench riders had started bringing our Game Boys and link cables and were finally starting to enjoy ourselves during the games.

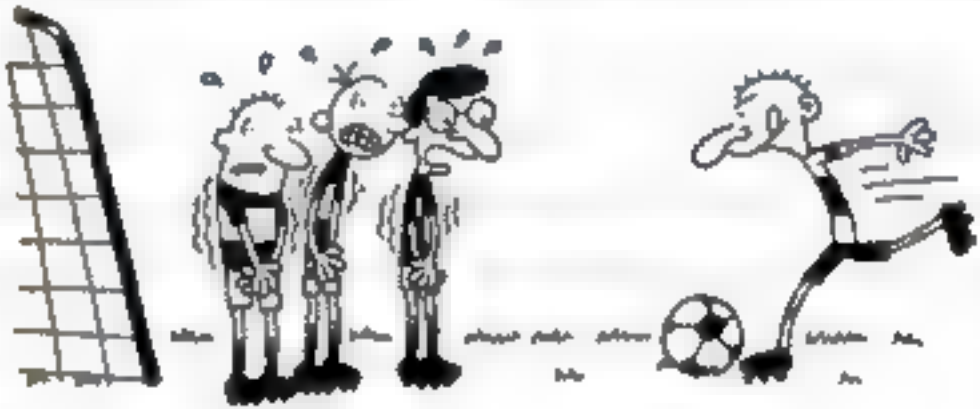


At one point in the second half, Mr. Keith yelled for the whole group of us to get in the game.

None of us had really been paying any attention to the game, so when we got on the field, we didn't know what was what.

A couple kids on our team told us that the other team had a free kick, and that the three of us were supposed to form a "shield" to protect the goal. So we all lined up side by side in front of our goal.

And so the referee blows the whistle and a kid on the other team winds up to kick the ball straight at us.



Well, the three of us did what any reasonable person would do in this situation: we ducked.

So the ball sailed over our heads, but luckily our goalie, Ian, plucked it out of the air and booted it halfway up the field.

Mr. Keith took us out of the game the first chance he could.

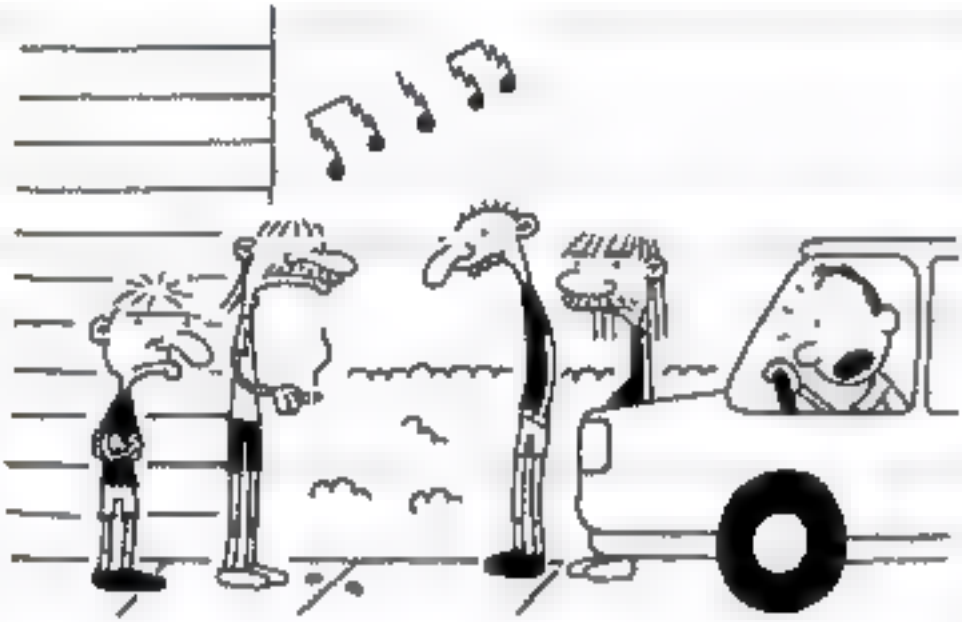
He barked at us for about five minutes for not standing still and blocking the ball.

But I figure if I have to choose between getting yelled at by Mr. Keith or getting my nose broken by a soccer ball, give me the yelling every time.

We won the game anyway, just like we always do. But Mr. Keith was pretty wound up over the fact that the ball actually made it all the way down to our goalie for the first time this season.

After soccer Dad drove me home. We skipped the post-game McDonalds celebration, so we ended up getting home earlier than usual.

Rodrick's band practice wasn't over yet, and a whole bunch of teenagers were just hanging out in our driveway. I guess they must have gotten drawn to the rock and roll music the way moths get drawn to a light.



You should have seen the look on Dad's face. To give you an idea of how he reacted to finding his driveway full of teenagers, imagine pulling back your shower curtain and finding your bathtub full of rats.

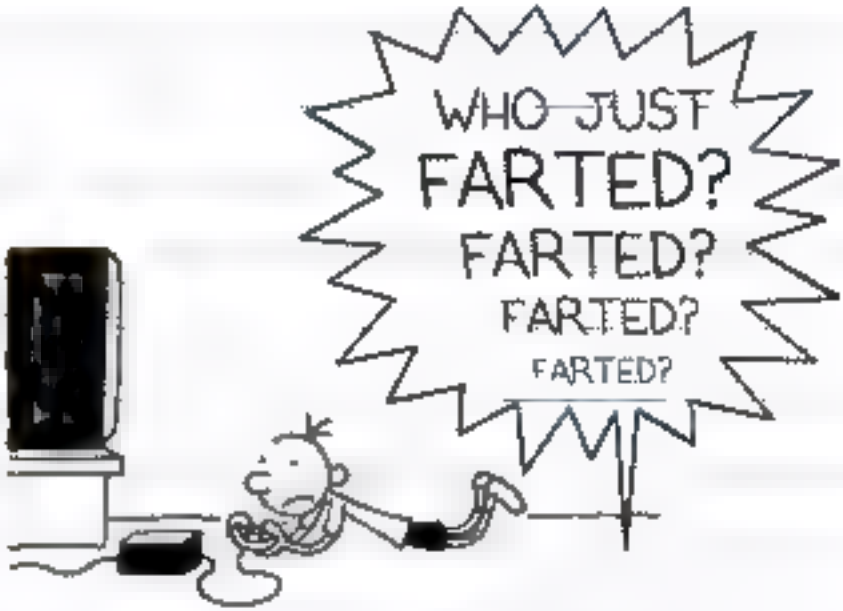
Dad went in the house and I guess he was going to call the cops or something, but Mom stopped him. She said those kids out in the driveway weren't doing any harm, and you can't blame them for "appreciating" Rodrick's music.

I really don't see how Mom said that with a straight face. If you ever heard Rodrick's band practicing, you'd know why.

First of all, from what I can tell, they don't even play real songs.

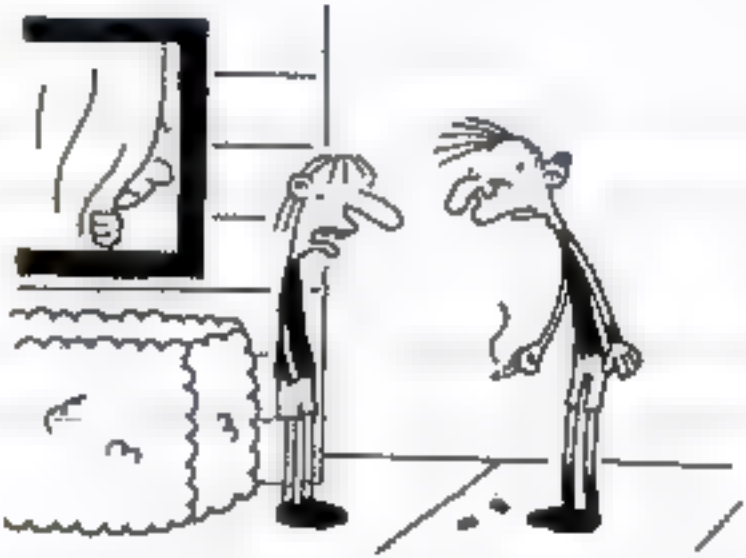
Everybody just does their own thing on their instruments, and every once in a while Bill yells out "Rock and Roll" or something like that.

And they just got this echo pedal, which is already starting to get really annoying.



So I don't know if Mom really likes Rodrick's music or if she was just trying to avoid having a big scene with the cops coming to the house.

All I know that is that Dad couldn't relax until the last teenager was out of his driveway, which was 45 minutes or so after band practice ended.



I figure Dad's going to try to put a stop to all this, but I don't know how he can do it without crossing Mom.

Sunday, October 24th

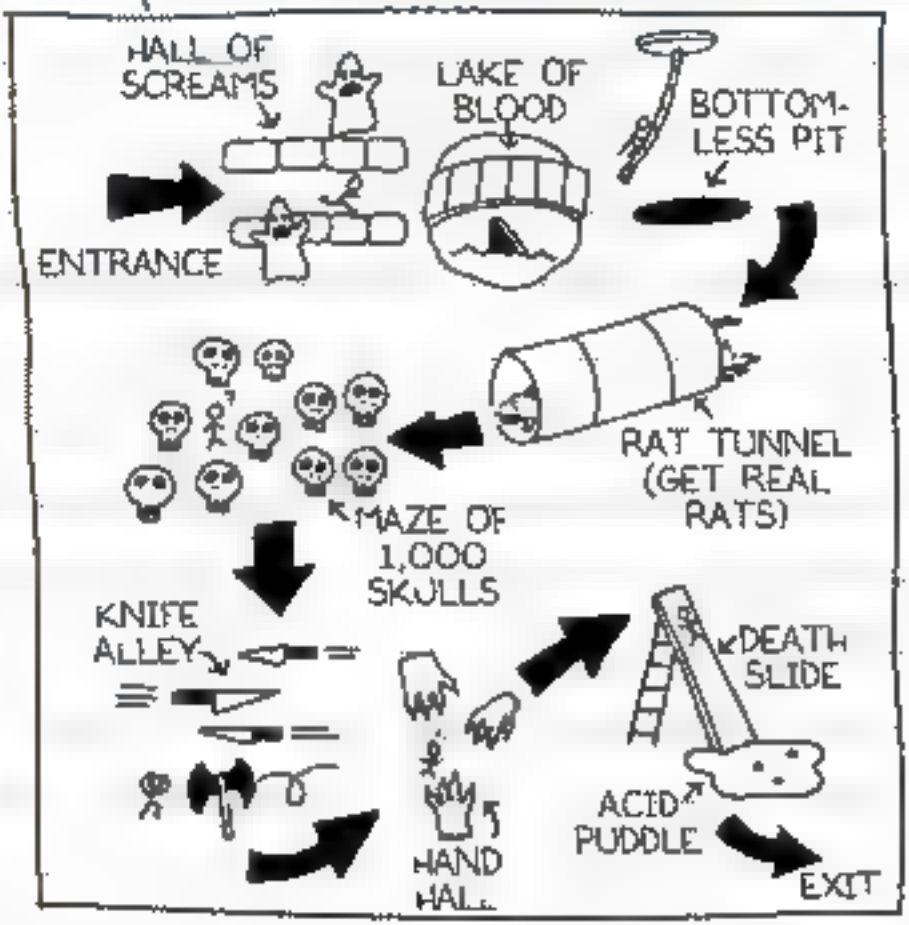
While Manny was watching Sesame Street for the millionth time today, I realized I have GOT to get my own television set.

That thing Bryce Anderson did with the outdoor restaurant really got me thinking. If he can milk people in the neighborhood for a couple hundred dollars, why can't I?

So I had a brilliant idea: what about a Haunted House? The timing is perfect because Halloween is exactly one week away.

Rowley thought it was a pretty good idea, too, so he asked his dad if we could set one up in his basement. Rowley's dad said it was o.k. as long as were done and cleaned up by 5:00 today.

So we spent most of the day coming up with an awesome plan.

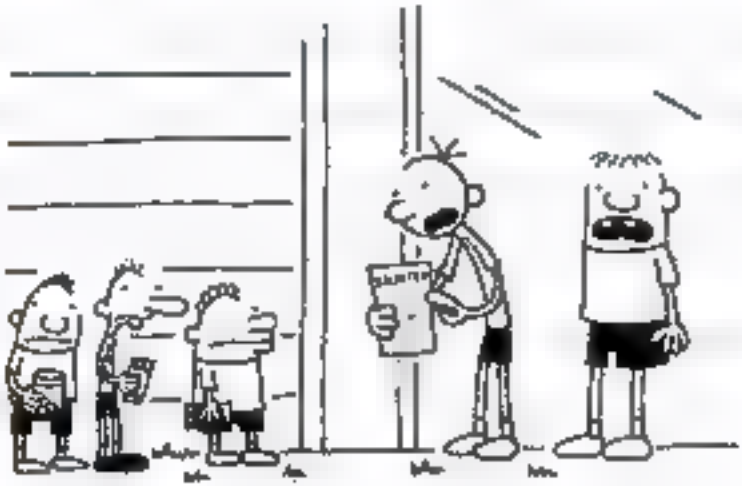


Before we actually got started setting up the Haunted House, we made a flyer and posted it all over the neighborhood.

We may have oversold it a little bit with the shark thing, but I figured since this was "one day only," we needed to do something extra to get people in the door.

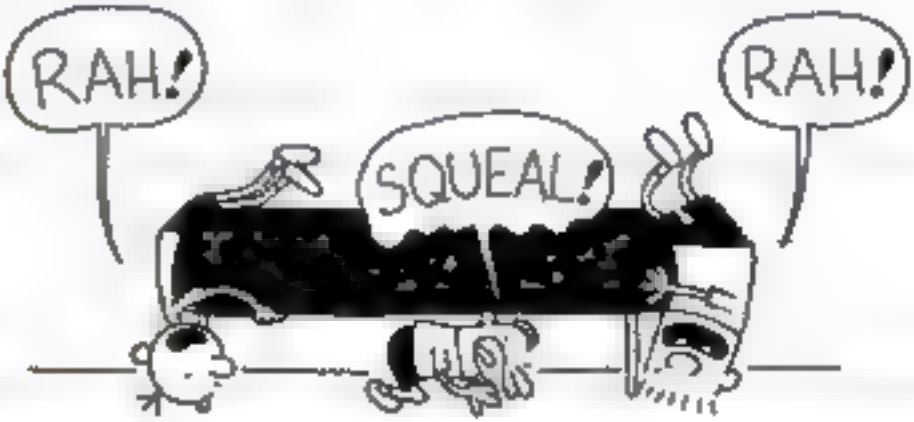
By the time we put all the flyers up and got back to Rowley's basement, it was already 2:00. There wasn't enough time to follow our original plan, so we had to cut some corners.

When 3:00 rolled around we looked outside of Rowley's sliding glass window, and believe it or not, there were a whole bunch of neighborhood kids waiting in line. The original price on the flyers said 50 cents, but now that I saw how many kids there were, I switched the price to $1.50 and just told the kids there was a typo.



I figured I made us 20 extra bucks with that move alone.

The first kid through the door was Shane Smedley. He started to make his way through the Hall of Screams, which was just the Jeffersons' guest bed with a navy blue sheet thrown over it.



Everything was going according to plan until Shane just sort of shut down directly under the center of the bed and started sucking his thumb and whimpering.

We tried to get him to crawl through to the other end, but he wouldn't budge. After about 10 minutes of this, I started thinking of all the money we were losing with this kid clogging up the Hall of Screams.

We tried poking him with a broomstick, but that didn't move him, either. Finally, Rowley had to go get his dad to tell him what was going on, and Mr. Jefferson called Mr. Smedley.

It took another 20 minutes for Mr. Smedley to show up, and by that time, all our paying customers had split.

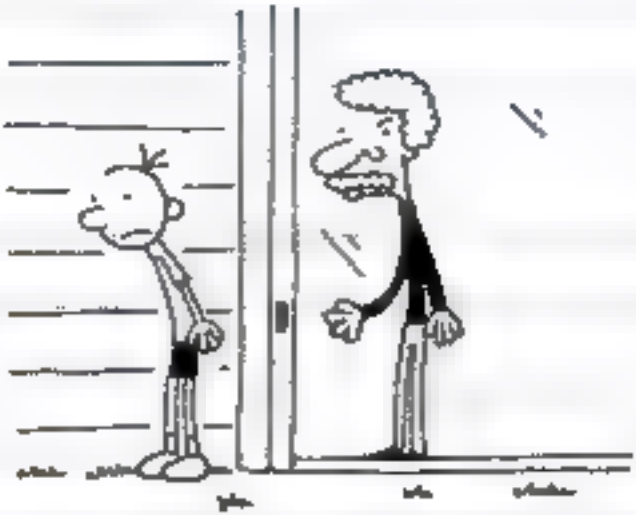
But I had bigger problems to deal with, because Mr. Smedley was royally ticked off at me and Rowley.

Mr. Smedley didn't get it that this was a Haunted House. He thought that we were just picking on his kid (who had wet his pants, by the way).

I admit, if you looked around, it didn't really look like a Haunted House. We only got to finish the Hall of Screams and the Lake of Blood, which was just Rowley's old baby pool with a half a bottle of ketchup in it. And Mr. Smedley still wasn't satisfied even after I showed him the flyer and the map with our original plan.

We finally got him to believe us, but he made us refund Shane's admission fee.

And Mr. Jefferson cancelled the whole Haunted House right then and there.



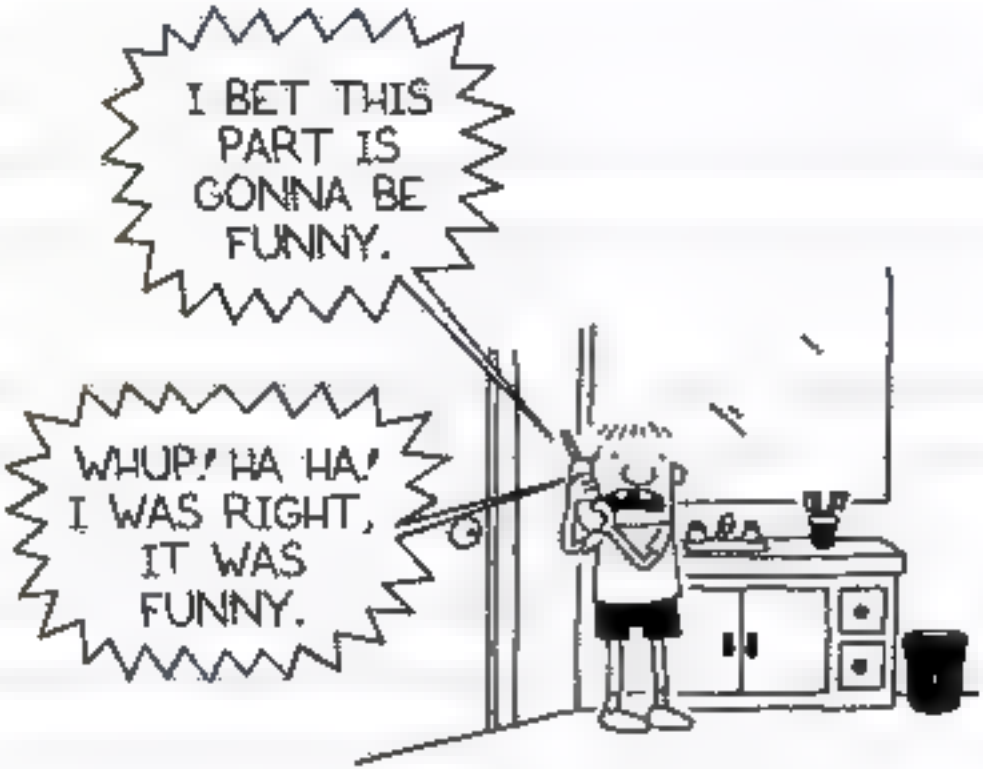
The only good news was that Mr. Smedley had seen "50 cents" on the flyer and didn't realize we were really charging $1.50. So at least me and Rowley came away with a buck to split.

Monday, October 25th

Believe it or not, Rowley got grounded for yesterday's Haunted House catastrophe. He told me his parents wanted to teach him a lesson about what happens when you "associate yourself with people of questionable character," which I guess means me.

Anyway his punishment is that he's not allowed to watch t.v. for a week. I felt pretty bad for him, so tonight, I did a play-by-play of a couple of shows over the phone while he hid in his bathroom.

I did my best to keep up with what was going on on the screen, but to be honest with you, I don't know if Rowley was getting the full effect.

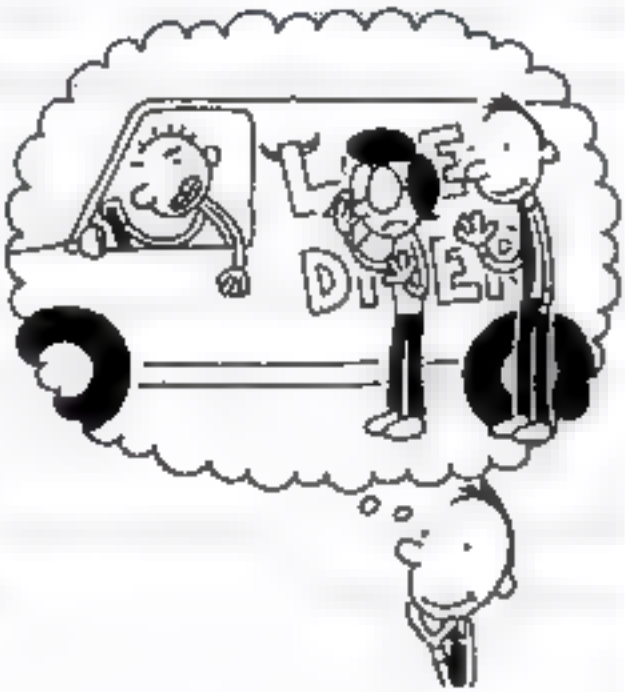


I have a feeling that we're not going to keep doing this every night because about five minutes into the third show, Rowley said he had to go, and he sounded a little huffy.

Tuesday, October 26th

Mom and Rodrick were really getting into it tonight. Rodrick has been hitting up Mom and Dad for money for band equipment, and he wants them to give him the money they were planning on using to send him to college. Rodrick doesn't want to go to college because he says his band is going to go "all the way."

Dad stayed out of it, because I'll bet the thought of Rodrick packing up his drums and driving around the country for a couple of years is just fine by him.



Mom kept pressing Rodrick, asking him what he would do if his band didn't make it and he needed money for food and shelter.

But she wouldn't let it go, no matter what he said. Mom asked him, "What if you lost an arm and couldn't play drums any more?"

So Rodrick fished around in his magazine pile and pulled out a picture of a one-armed drummer from some famous band. So I guess he had her there.

Wednesday, October 27th

Today was Manny's first day of kindergarten. Mom decided he had outgrown daycare, so she got him into the same school I used to go to as a kid.

I remember my first day of kindergarten. There was this kid named Quinn who came up to me while I was playing with blocks.

I had never heard that kind of joke before, and I guess I took it literally.

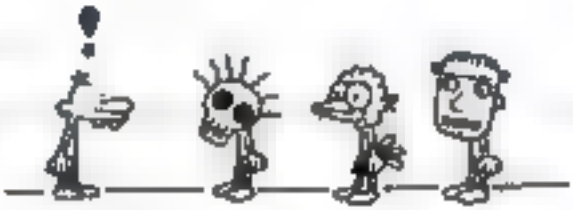
I had this idea in my head that now that I admitted that I loved ice cream to this kid, I was really going to have to marry it.

I was really sweating it out until Mom found out that I was upset. She told me how it was a joke and that Quinn was just having fun at my expense.

Anyway after I thought about it for a while I realized it was a pretty good joke, so I tried it out on some of the other kids at school. But I could never do it as good as Quinn.

And even though I realized Quinn was a joker, he got me a bunch more times that year.

But back to Manny. Like I said, today was his first day of kindergarten. Unfortunately today was also the kindergarten's Halloween party, and it was not the best way for Manny to meet his new classmates.



I guess Manny must have totally freaked out, because he climbed up into the coat closet and wouldn't come down until the teachers called Mom in from work.

So Mom and Dad decided they're going to keep Manny in daycare until next year.

Thursday, October 28th

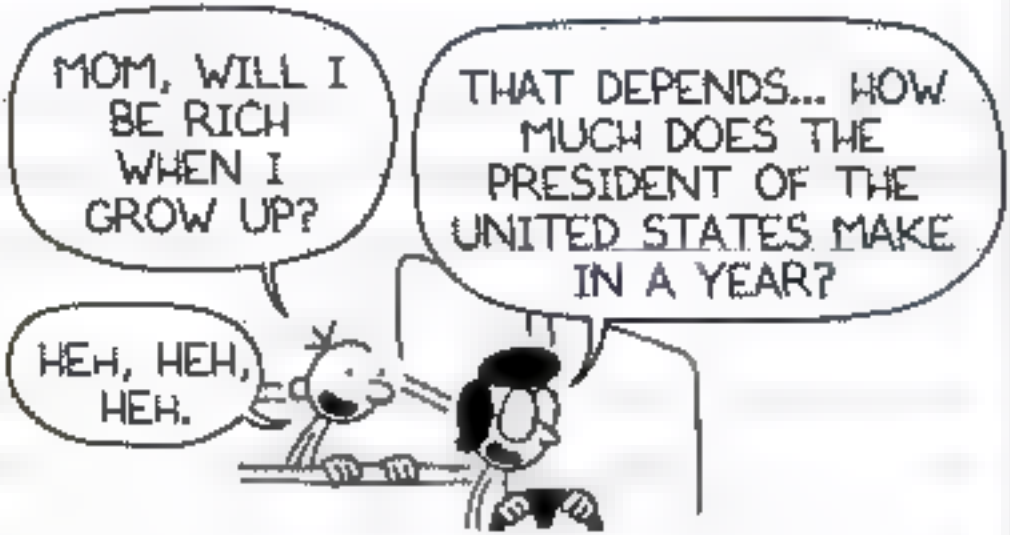
Today after school me and Rowley headed down to the school to try to get on t.v. We found out there was a television crew down there doing a news feature on Halloween, and we knew we had a pretty good shot of getting our faces in front of the camera. So when the film started rolling, we got on the hay ride tractor and hammed it up for the camera. But our plan got spoiled by the lady doing the report.

They hustled us down off the tractor and replaced us with some younger, cuter kids who just did the same exact thing we did. And guess what? When I turned on the news tonight it was the little kids who made it onto the news.

Lately I have really started to notice how I don't get the same type of attention from everyone as I did when I was a year or two younger. I was starting to feel a little bummed out about it, and I made the mistake of talking to Dad to try to lift my spirits.

Dad went on to say that I'm entering the "Awkward Years," and that the best advice he could give me was to not let anybody take my picture from now until I'm 17. I was pretty miffed about what he said until I ran into Rodrick at home, and I started thinking that maybe Dad's advice wasn't so bad after all.

Anyway, I learned a lesson from it. If you want your ego boosted, talk to Mom, not Dad.



Friday, October 29th

Tonight was the night Mom promised to take me and Rowley to The Labyrinth, a haunted house that's run by the Junior class at Crossland High.

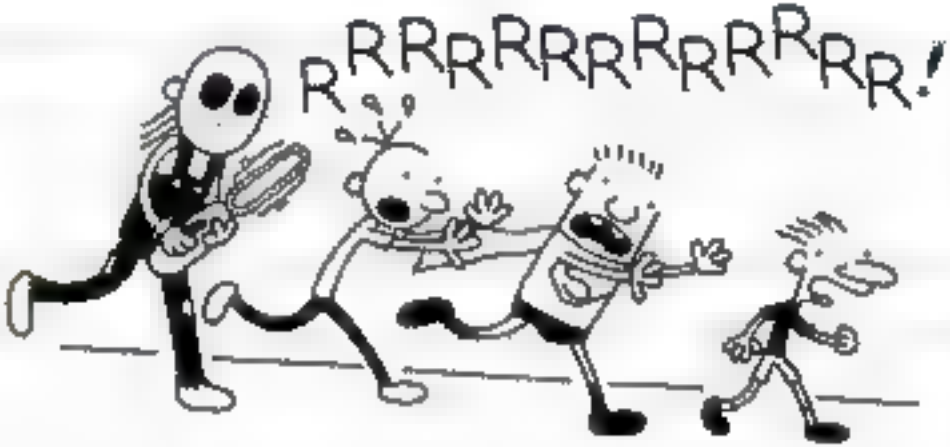
Rowley showed up at my house wearing his Halloween costume from last year, which really burned me up. I specifically told him to wear regular clothes, but of course he didn't listen.

It was embarrassing enough walking around the neighborhood with Rowley last Halloween, so you can understand how I was not too thrilled to be going to The Labyrinth with him wearing blue tights.

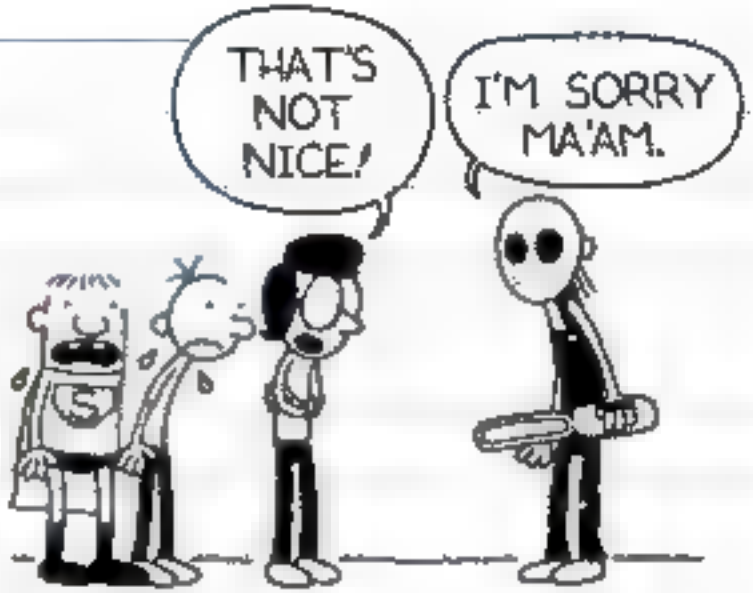
I tried not to let it bother me too much, though. I have never been allowed to go to The Labyrinth until this year, and I wasn't going to let Rowley spoil it for me.

The Labyrinth is run by the junior class at Crossland High School, and let me just say, their haunted house put the one me and Rowley made to shame.

Once we paid our admission and went inside, it was one serious scare after another. There was always someone jumping out at you dressed up as a vampire or something like that, and I had to use all my courage just to keep moving forward. But the scariest thing of all was Chainsaw Alley, where this big guy in a hockey mask had a REAL chainsaw going. Rodrick told me all about Chainsaw Alley yesterday, but I still wasn't ready for how scary it was. Rodrick said the chainsaw had a rubber blade, but I wasn't about to hang around and find out for sure.



The chainsaw guy chased me and Rowley into a tunnel and I was about to die of fright, when all of the sudden Mom stepped in and saved our hides.



I was a little embarrassed by the situation, but to be honest with you, I was a whole lot more relieved than embarrassed. Mom made the chainsaw guy show us a side exit, and that ended our Labyrinth experience right there. I protested but I think Mom could tell my heart wasn't in it.

Mom said she was going to write an "angry letter" to Crossland's principal. I just pray she keeps my name out of it.

I have a hard enough time getting to sleep at night because of an overactive imagination, and this experience is not going to help. Ever since I was a little kid, I've thought there was a little old man living under my bed. So when I turn off the light, I make sure I don't touch the ground. Tonight I think I landed in my bed before the light actually went off.

Friday, October 30th

Tomorrow is Halloween, and as usual, I don't have a costume yet.

This morning I was over at Rowley's to check out the costume his dad bought him. It's a really awesome knight outfit that is a whole lot cooler than what he wore last year.

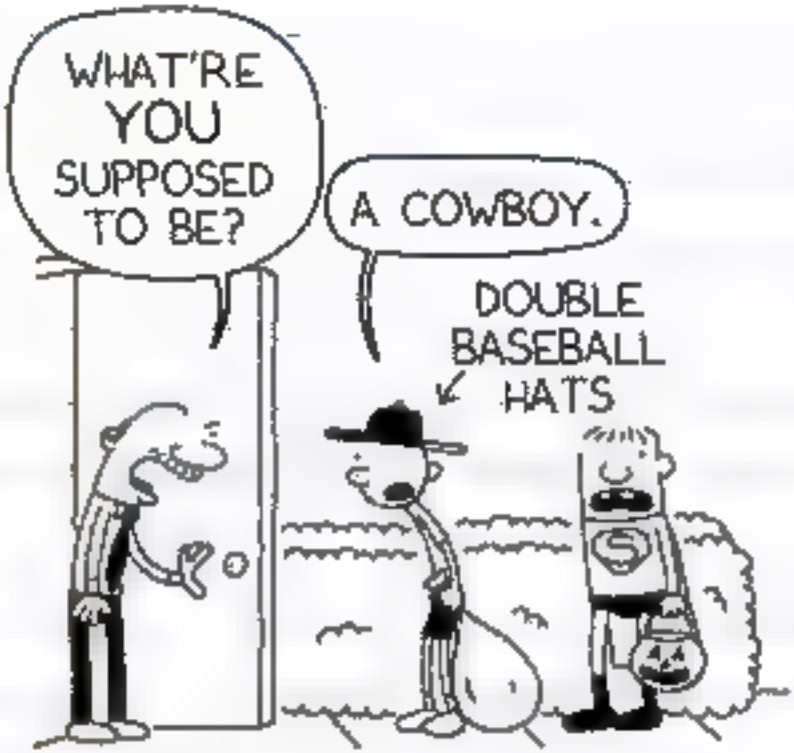
I have never had a store-bought costume and I have to admit I am a little jealous.

Every year I just throw something together at the last minute.

I figure I'll bring back the Toilet Paper Mummy costume again this year since I haven't used it for a while. But they said it might rain tomorrow night, which could be a problem.

Something I've noticed is that for the past few years, grown-ups have been getting pretty cranky over my lame costumes. I'm starting to think it's having an effect on the amount of candy I'm bringing in.

So I might want to put a little effort into it or I'm going to come up with a half-empty pillowcase, like I did last year.

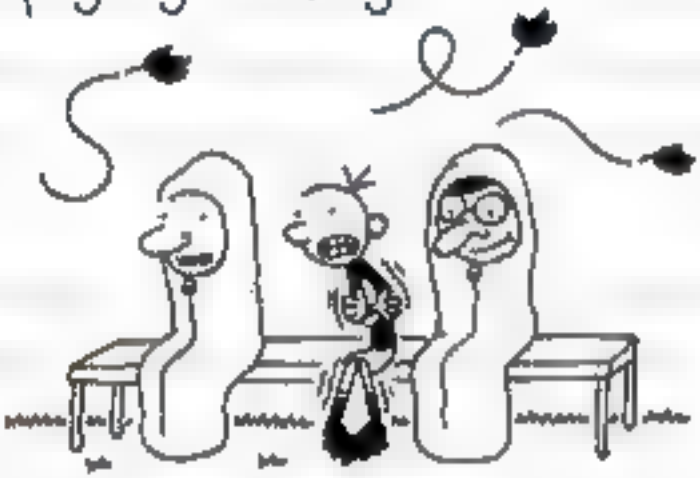


The main reason I'm never prepared when it comes to costumes is that I spend all my time trying to figure out the most efficient route me and Rowley should take on Halloween night.

This year I think I've come up with the ultimate plan to hit as many houses as possible. But it's going to require that we take a shortcut through Snake Road, which Rowley is not going to be that thrilled about.

After I checked out Rowley's costume I had to go to my soccer game.

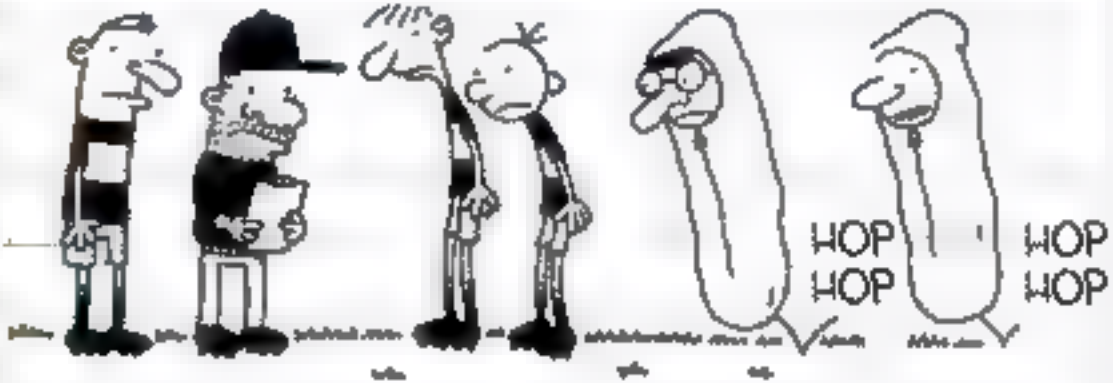
This week it was FREEZING cold again. Mackey Creavey and Manuel Gonzales had the brains to bring sleeping bags to the game.



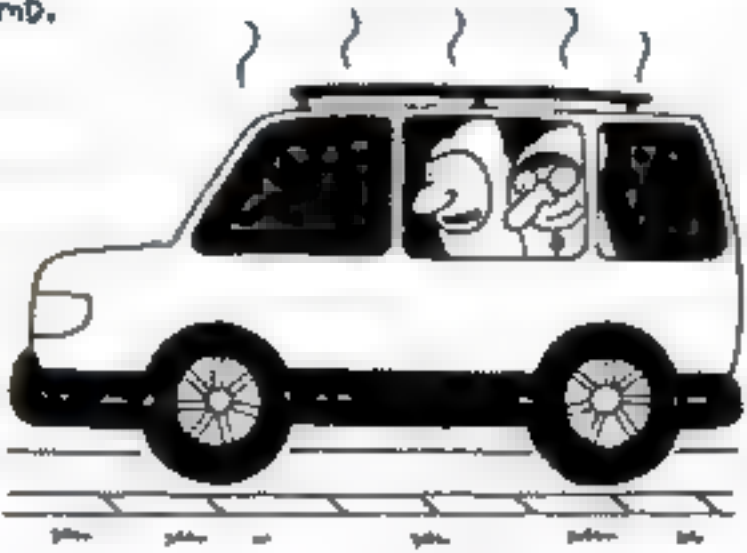
They brought an extra sleeping bag, but of course Dad said he wanted me to be ready to go into the game. So I sat there on the cold metal bench turning into a human popsicle.

At halftime we all huddled around the coach to go over Mr. Keith's strategy.

Ordinarily, the coach makes everyone join in the huddle, even us bench players. But after getting an eyeful of Mackey and Manuel, he told them they were excused to go to Mr. Creavey's car for the rest of the game.



So Mackey and Manuel got to sit in a heated SUV while I sat on the bench shifting from one butt cheek to the other to keep one side from getting too numb.



And I know for a FACT that the Creaveys have a t.v. in their SUV, with a video game hookup and a ton of snacks.

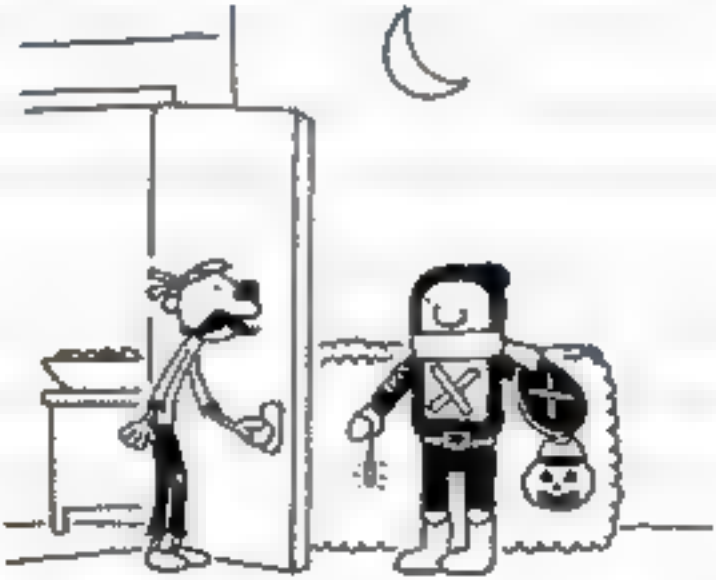
Sunday, October 31st - Halloween!

About an hour before we were supposed to head out for trick or treating tonight, I still didn't have a costume. At that point I was seriously considering breaking out my Cowboy outfit.

But then Mom knocked on my door and handed me a store-bought Pirate costume, with an eye patch and fake mustache and even a cool rubber hook.

I didn't know what made Mom think to go out and buy me a costume, but I was glad she did. And with the costume out of the way, I was able to use my time to keep improving my plan to score as much candy as possible.

Rowley showed up at about 6:30 wearing his Knight costume, but it was practically unrecognizable. Rowley's Mom is real big on Halloween safety, so she had cut out a huge opening in the front of the helmet so he could see better. Plus, she made him wear his scarf and his winter coat, which was covered in reflective tape.



So once again, I was embarrassed to be seen with Rowley on Halloween.

So I said goodbye to Mom, and me and Rowley started to leave. But Mom stopped us before we could get out the door.

I should have known there was a catch when Mom gave me that costume.

But if she thought I was going to let Manny slow us down tonight dressed up as my Pirate twin, she was crazy.

I told Mom there was no way we could take Manny with us, because we were going to try to hit 152 houses in three hours. Plus, I told her we were going to take a shortcut through Snake Road, which was too dangerous for a little kid like Manny.

Saying that last part was a mistake. Mom knows that Snake Road is where all the older kids hang out to smoke. And the next thing I knew, she was telling Dad he had to *come* along with us to make sure we didn't step foot in that part of the neighborhood.

Dad wasn't real happy about all this, because he just wanted to hide out in the bushes all night and soak the teenagers walking by with a trash can full of water.

Dad tried to protest, but Mom didn't want to hear it. And so the *four* of us were stuck trick-or-treating together.

I tried to convince Dad to let me and Rowley go off on our own, but Dad knew that would put him on shaky ground with Mom.

Before we even got to our first house, we ran into Mr. Mitchell and his kid Jeremy, who is Manny's age. So naturally they tagged along with us.

And you can see how it went from just me and Rowley to a whole group of people in less than a minute.

Mr. Mitchell is pretty legendary in the neighborhood because he is a huge blabbermouth, and the only thing he talks about is himself. Dad tried to be a good sport and have a conversation with him, but somehow the topic always got back to Mr. Mitchell.

And to make matters worse, every time Mr. Mitchell talked, he stopped walking. So in the first hour, we had only gone to seven houses. Manny and Jeremy wouldn't even go up to the front door of most houses, because some of the parents giving out candy were wearing scary costumes like werewolf masks or fake scars. And when we got to Mr. Washington's house, Dad took a look at Mr. Washington's crazy teeth and complimented him on them.

Mr. Washington just slammed the door without giving out any candy, which took Dad by surprise.

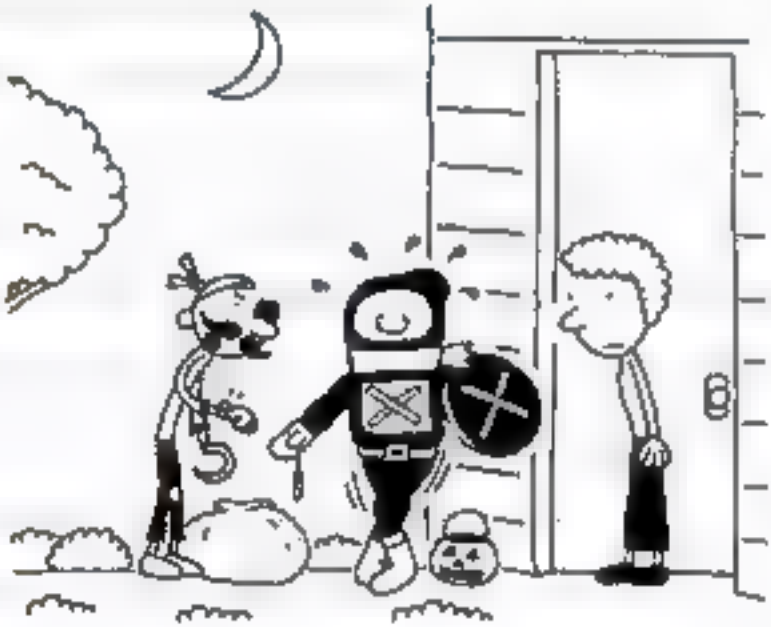
I would have told him that those were Mr. Washington's ACTUAL teeth, and not some Halloween prop, but I knew it would just slow us down even more.

Eventually, Dad got fed up with Mr. Mitchell's yakking, and Dad decided to head home with Manny.

Luckily, Dad forgot all about Mom's warning to stick with us, because when he went home, me and Rowley took off.

We actually had a pretty good run until Rowley told me he really needed to get to a bathroom. I made him hold out for another 45 minutes, but by the time we got to Gramma's house, it was pretty clear he couldn't make it any further.

So I told Rowley that if he wasn't back outside in two minutes, I was leaving without him.



Well, Rowley was NOT out in two minutes, and he was not even out in 20 minutes. He finally came out after 35 minutes. It turns out he couldn't figure out how to get out of his "knight belt" and had to get my Gramma to help him.

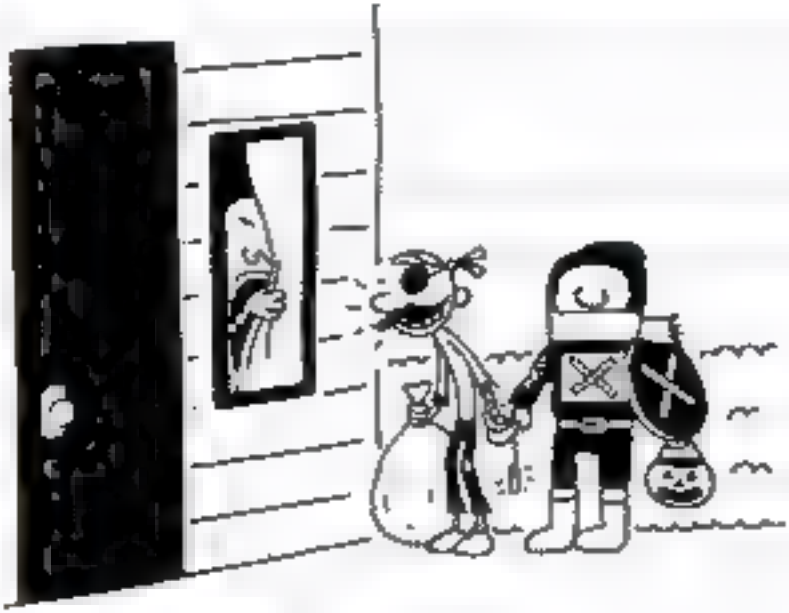
I'll tell you, if I had to choose between going to the bathroom in my Halloween costume and having my friend's grandmother undress me, I'd choose option "A" every time.

And to my credit, I didn't ditch Rowley, even though he deserved it.

But when Rowley finds himself three Butterfingers and about 10 packs of Smarties short at the end of the night, let's just say I was trying to make up for the candy he cost me.

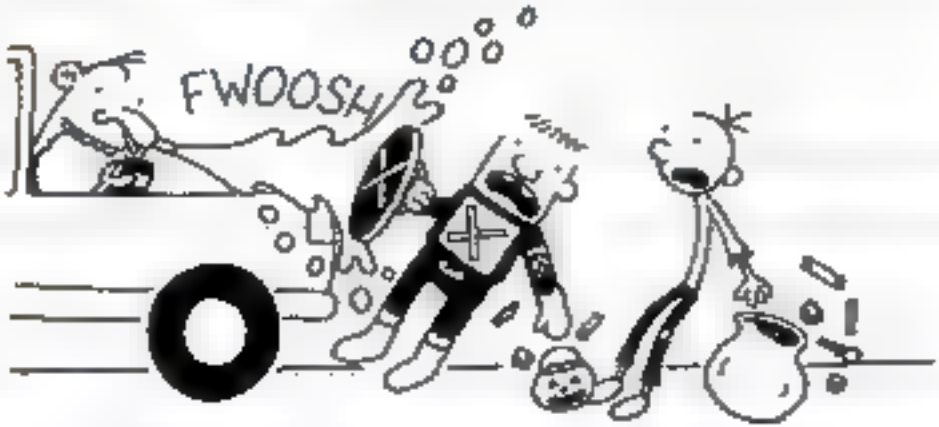
After that, we hit another 30 houses or so and decided to call it a night.

The way you can tell when your Halloween is over is when people start showing up at the door in their pajamas giving you dirty looks.



So we headed home, counting up our candy and talking about how it turned out to be a pretty good night, even after a rough start.

Then out of nowhere, this pickup truck comes roaring down the street with a bunch of high school kids in it. They must have had a fire extinguisher or something, because the next thing I knew, there was a stream of water headed right at us.



But Rowley totally saved us and our candy from getting wet with his shield. I don't know if it was quick thinking or just an automatic reaction, but I was pretty impressed.

When the teenagers drove away, I yelled out after them, which may have been a mistake.

The truck came to a screeching stop and then turned around, and I knew we were doomed. We cut across the neighborhood as fast as we could, but those guys stayed right on our tails the whole time.

We headed straight for Collin's house, where I was hoping we would be safe.

We got to Collin's front door right as the truck was closing in on us. Collin's parents were at a party, but Rowley knew Collin's babysitter, who let us inside. Collin was asleep upstairs, so me and Rowley just went into the den and kept an eye on the truck, which was parked under a street light outside. I tried to make the teenagers go away, but they wouldn't budge.

After a while, we realized those guys weren't going anywhere, so we decided we were going to have to spend the night at Collin's. And once we made that decision, we got a little bit cocky.

I started making monkey noises out the window to taunt the guys in the truck. And for some reason, Rowley made owl sounds, but I guess it was the same general idea.

Rowley called his parents to say he was staying over at Collin's, and I called Mom to tell her the same thing. But when Mom answered the phone, she was FURIOUS, saying we were out two hours past curfew. She said I had to come home right this instant, or I would be grounded for a month.

Now I knew I was in REAL trouble. The truck was nowhere to be seen, but I knew those guys were just trying to draw us out.

I told Rowley we were going to have to make a run for it. He said there was no way he was going to go back out there, and he was just going to sleep over at Collin's. But I gave him this big speech about friendship and loyalty, and by the time I was done, he was practically crying.

So Rowley agreed to go with me. We snuck out the back door and started to head home, staying out of the street lights. I knew the only place the teenagers wouldn't expect us to go was on their turf - Snake Road.

There are no lights at all on Snake Road, which makes it extra spooky. Every time we heard a car coming, we dove in the bushes and waited for it to pass.

I couldn't believe it, but we made it all the way down Snake Road without getting caught.

We were still really paranoid all the way home, and we didn't let our guard down until the moment we set foot in my driveway.

But right then, I heard a horrible scream and saw a giant wave of water coming towards us.

Man, I forgot ALL about Dad, and I totally paid the price for it.

I'm sure there's a lesson I should learn about tonight, but I'm not sure I really care what it is.

All I know for sure is that wet Pixie Sticks taste almost exactly the same as construction paper.

Monday, November 1st

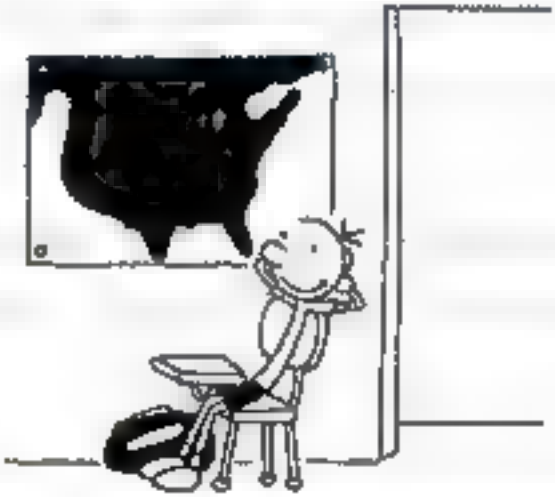
Today on the bus ride to school I saw that Collin's house got toilet papered last night, which I guess was no big surprise.

At school today I found out we have a test on state capitals tomorrow.

I have to say, I've been looking forward to this one for a long time.

I sit way in the back of the room, right next to this giant map of the United States, and all the state capitals are in big red print.

So I've got this one in the bag.



And tonight, I made a deal with Mom that if I get a 100% on my Social Studies test, she'll take me out to Pizza Hut tomorrow. Opportunities like this don't come along that often, so I figure I'd better milk this one for all it's worth.

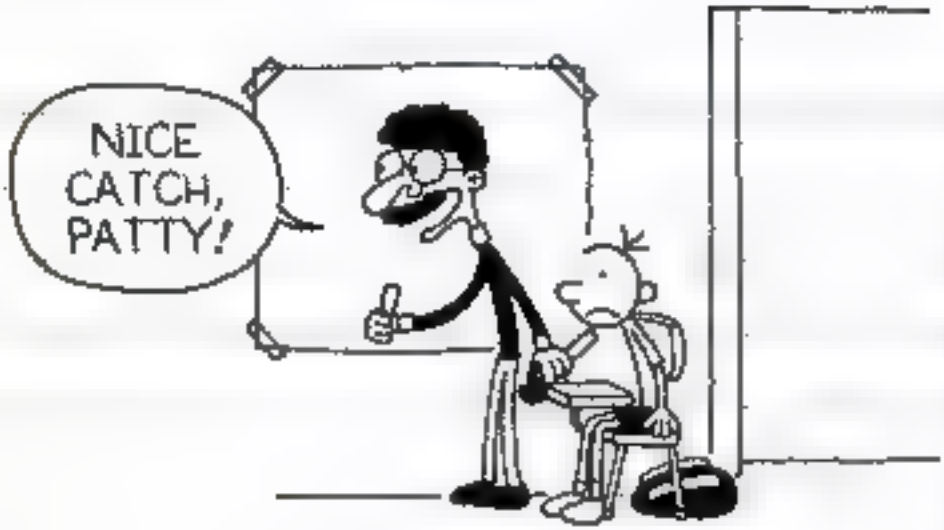
Tuesday, November 2nd

Next time I'm walking by Patty Farrell in the hallway, I need to remember to stick out my foot and trip her.

Today, we were ready to start taking our state capitals test, when all of the sudden Patty pipes up from the front row.

She told Mr. Beardo, our Social Studies teacher, that there was a map of the United States on the wall and that he should cover it up with some poster board before the test started.

So there went my perfect score.



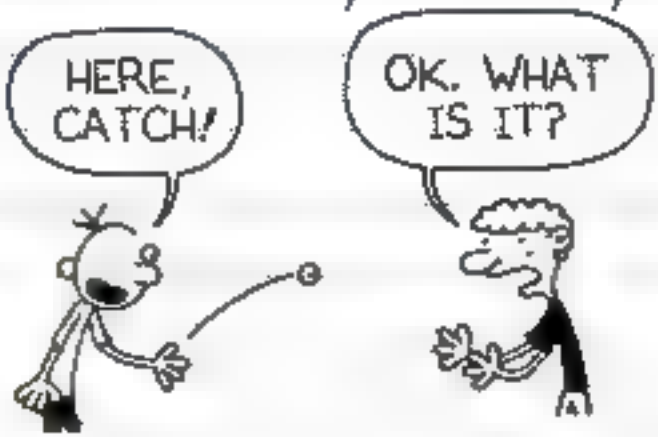
Last night I just watched t.v. and didn't study at ALL, and so I got a zero out of 50 on the test.

And what's really sad is, I don't even think I got the capital of my own state right.

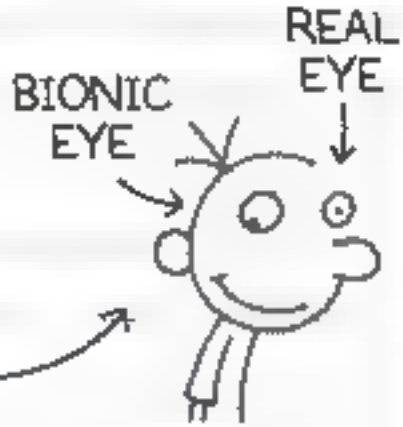
Wednesday, November 3rd

Every once in a while I wonder what my life would be like if I had a bionic hand or a bionic eye or something like that.

I was thinking that if I had a bionic eye, I could pull all sorts of wacky tricks on my friends.

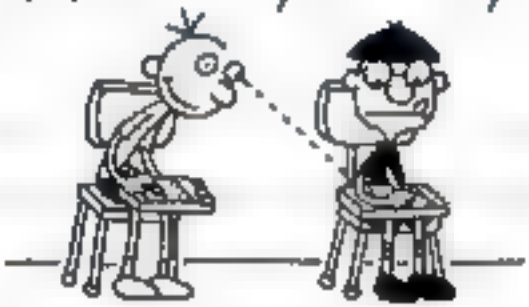


But even better than that, a bionic eye could help me get better grades in school. On the first day of class, I'd aim my bionic eye down like this:



Then I'd go up to my teacher and say, "Listen, I just wanted to tell you I have a bionic eye and it's not properly adjusted. So don't think I'm looking at other kids' papers."

Then, right before a test, I'd aim my bionic eye down at my OWN paper and I'd look at some brainy kid's paper with my REAL eye.



I could copy away! And the teacher would be too dumb to notice.

Unfortunately, I do not have a bionic eye. But if I did, maybe I wouldn't have failed that Social Studies test yesterday, and tonight I would have had a pepperoni pizza instead of meat loaf for dinner.

Thursday, November 4th

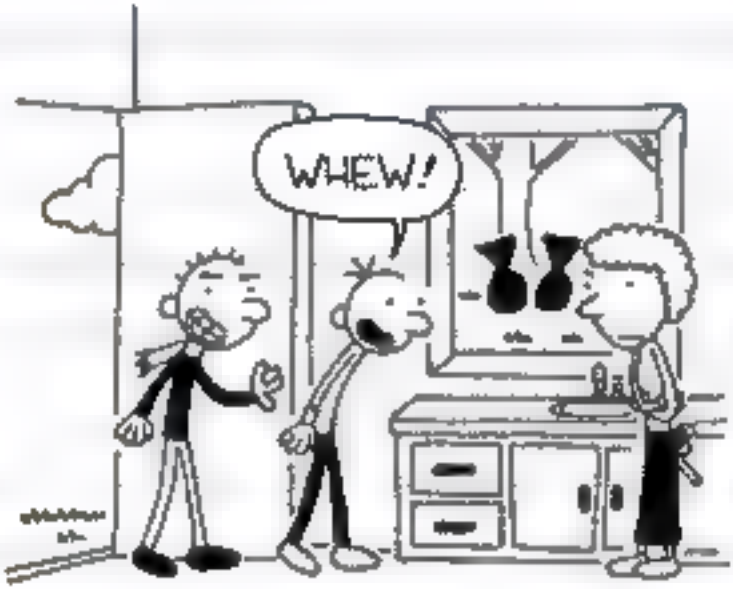
Today after school Mom sent me and Rodrick over to Gramma's to rake her leaves. The deal was that Gramma would give us three dollars for every bag of leaves we bagged, plus hot chocolate afterwards.

It usually doesn't work out when me and Rodrick work together, and I thought today would be the same way. About 10 minutes into the job, Rodrick came over to my side of the yard and told me I was doing things all wrong.

But Rodrick showed me how I was putting WAY too many leaves in a single bag, and that if I just tied the bag closer to the bottom, I could get a lot more bags done in an hour.

He also showed me how dry leaves fluffed up a bag a lot more than wet leaves. And sure enough, he was right. We went through garbage bags like nobody's business. See, now THIS is the kind of big brother advice I wish I got from Rodrick more often.

We went through the bags so fast that we actually ran out within a half an hour.



Gramma paid us our money, but she sent us home without our hot chocolate. Which really stunk, because as far as I'm concerned, a deal's a deal.

Friday, November 5th

Well, it didn't take long for Rodrick to move back down to the bottom of my list.

Tonight after soccer practice, I was waiting around for Dad to come and pick me up. It was pretty cold out, so I was looking forward to getting in Dad's toasty car. But Rodrick showed up instead, 45 minutes late. Apparently Dad told Rodrick he has to pick me up from soccer practice from now on.

Rodrick has one of those half-car half-truck things, and whenever he takes me anywhere, he always makes me sit in the back. That's because Rodrick's stupid friend Ward always rides with him wherever he goes, and the passenger seat is never free.

To give you an idea of what Ward is like, he's the kind of guy who believes professional wrestling is real.

And you don't want to tell him the truth, because you would probably take away his only reason to live.

He always comes to Rodrick's band practices even though he doesn't sing or play any instruments. I guess he's like a roadie, except that the band never goes anywhere. So Ward doesn't really have a function.

So I got to freeze to death in the back of Rodrick's car, with his music blaring in my ears.

And I think Rodrick took the long way home on purpose, but I can't say for sure, because my eyelids were frozen shut.

When we got home I complained to Mom. But she said what she always says, which is that when Rodrick has a "guest," I have to be polite and sit in the back.

Saturday, November 6th

I forgot to mention this before, but my new position on the soccer team is backup goalie.

It's all because of a genius move I made a few days ago. I noticed that Ian, the real goalie, never has to run laps or do push ups or any of the other things the rest of us chumps have to do. He just goes to the other end of the field and practices with the assistant coach, Mr. Larry.

So I asked Mr. Keith if I could be the team's backup goalie. He just snorted at me, which I took as a "Yes."

So I've been down at the other end of the field with Ian and Mr. Larry for the past few days.

Neither one of them really pays any attention to me, which is perfectly fine. It gives me a chance to just relax and play in the anthills down around the corner of the penalty box.

And today, at my first game as the backup goalie, I found out there are a couple more advantages. For one, there is no real offical goalie uniform, so you can pretty much wear whatever you want. I put on about three pairs of long johns and two rugby shirts, and that kept me nice and warm for the whole game.

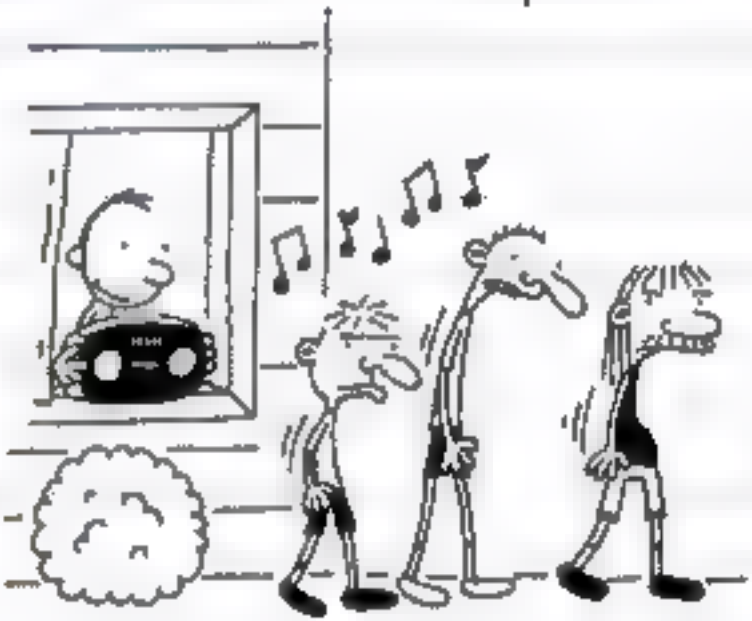
But the best thing about not being in a regular uniform is that Mr. Keith can't put you in with the other bench players when they need a human shield to block penalty kicks.

So I'm pretty proud of myself for this one.

After the game, Dad stopped at Wal Mart. He bought a boom box, which was real strange, because Dad doesn't like any kind of music, as far as I can tell.

When we got home, our driveway was full of teenagers hanging out listening to Rodrick's band, as usual. Dad just buzzed past them and headed inside.

But a few minutes later, Dad propped open a window and put his new boom box on the ledge, blaring classical music. And you would not BELIEVE how fast our driveway cleared out.



I think Dad was even more proud of his plan to get rid of the teenagers than I was of my backup goalie idea.

Mom was pretty mad at Dad for getting rid of Rodrick's "fans," but Dad played dumb.

Sunday, November 7th

Today I was invited to this kid Chirag's going-away party. His family is getting ready to move across the country, so I guess his parents wanted to give him a chance to say goodbye to his friends.

To be honest with you, I was surprised I got invited. I've been in Chirag's grade for the past six years, but I haven't always been so great to him. Back in the fourth grade, me and Ben used to talk real quiet around him to make him think he was losing his hearing.

Anyway, I was glad I got invited. Chirag's parents rented a moon bounce and a cotton candy machine, and there were something like five different kinds of cake.

But the best part of all was the party favors they gave to each kid to take home. My bag had a bunch of candy, a Whoopee cushion, x-ray goggles, and even a VIDEO game, so his folks must have spent a fortune.

Seriously, if I had known Chirag was loaded, I would have buddied up to him years ago.

When I got home, I went to the family room to play my new video game, but I was in for a nasty surprise.

Mom had bought Manny a whole bunch of educational video games, and he was playing one of them when I walked in.

Mom said that from now on, I was going to have to share my video game system with Manny. That's like telling Rodrick he has to "share" his underwear with me. In any case, I'm going to have to figure out a way around this new crisis.

Dad wasn't home for dinner tonight because he was at a Town Council meeting. I thought it was pretty strange that he went, because he never showed any interest in that kind of thing before.

But then I found out the reason. At the meeting, Dad proposed that the town install little speakers all over the public areas and play classical music to make the town more "peaceful."

I don't know if the Town Council members caught on to the fact that Dad was trying to drive all the teenagers out of the area, but they voted down his request. Which is good, because I don't need to be known as the kid whose Dad got Muzak piped into the whole town.

Monday, November 8th

Today after school nobody was home. So I knew it was the perfect opportunity to raid Rodrick's room.

Rodrick has two junk drawers stuffed with all sorts of interesting things, so I go through them any chance I get.

Rodrick has tons of stuff I can't usually get access to: rock and roll magazines, x-ray goggles, lighters, you name it. I could stay busy for hours down there.

There are a few of things Rodrick has in his room that are a complete mystery to me. For one, he has one of those keychain picture things from the beach, and he's standing next to some totally beautiful girl I've never met before.

I'm pretty good at drawing, but believe me, my picture doesn't do that girl justice.

I honestly don't know how Rodrick pulled that one off, because he's never had a girlfriend that I know about. And I can't ask him about it because then he'd know I've been rifling around in his room.

Whenever Rowley is over, I charge him a dollar to look at the keychain picture for 30 seconds. But I have to hold it, because Rowley gets all grabby.

There's another mystery I wasn't able to figure out until recently. Rodrick has a bunch of little slips of paper in his top drawer that look like this:

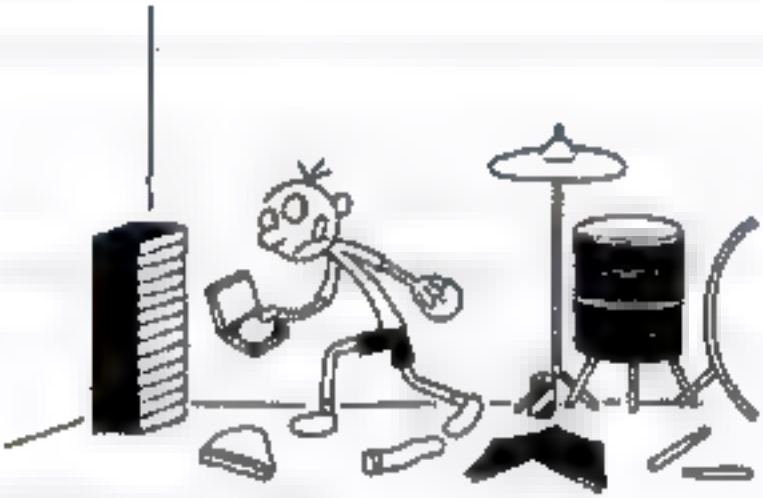
I overheard Rodrick and Ward talking about those little slips of paper the other day on the ride home from soccer practice.

They came up with the "#1" idea as a gimmick to impress girls. Their plan is that if a girl ever asks one of them for their number at a party, they'll whip out one of these slips of paper.

I don't know if their plan is going to work or not. But if it does, I'll make sure to swipe a few of those things for me and Rowley.

Rodrick also has all these CDs that have the "Parental Advisory" sticker on them, and Mom and Dad won't let me listen to them. In fact, Mom won't even let me look at the pictures on the CD sleeves.

So I did something totally risky today. I "borrowed" one of Rodrick's CDs from his CD tower.



I replaced the CD in the case with one of Manny's Sesame Street CDs, so if Rodrick finds out his CD is missing, at least he'll suspect the wrong person.

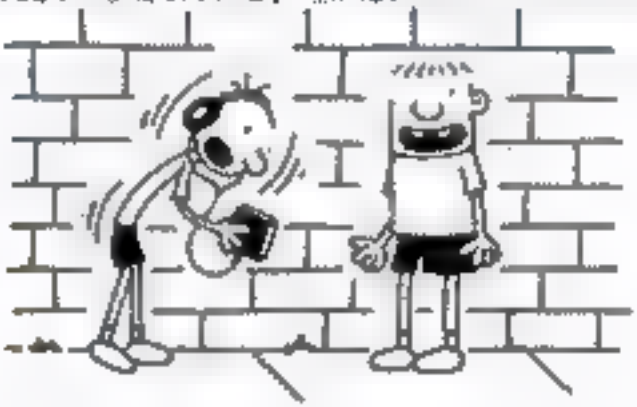
My Walkman is broken, so I called up Rowley and told him to bring his Dad's Walkman to school tomorrow.

Rowley sounded pretty uneasy about it, but he finally agreed. So it sounds like we've got a plan.

Tuesday, November 9th

Well, my plans to listen to Rodrick's music today got spoiled by Rowley. Rowley actually brought his dad's Walkman to school like I asked, but it didn't have any batteries in it. You know, sometimes I think that boy has no brains in his head.

So there we were at recess with a Walkman and a CD, but no way to listen to it. I came up with this idea for a game to pass the time. The object was that you had to put on the headphones and shake them off your head without using your hands. And the winner was whoever could do it in the shortest amount of time.



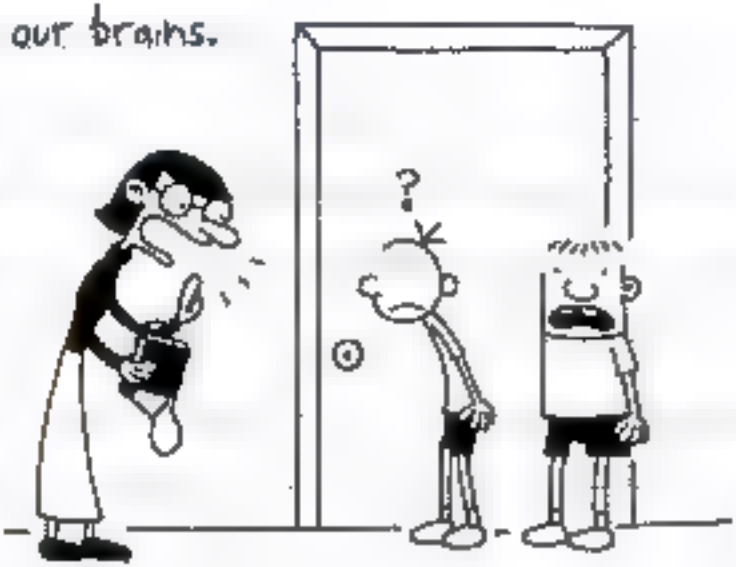
Rowley got the record in the third round by shaking the headphones loose in eight seconds.

But I beat that time on my very next try with a time of four and a half seconds. I'm pretty sure I shook some fillings out of my teeth on that one.

But Mrs. Craig, the recess monitor, caught us red-handed with the Walkman right in the middle of our game.

There's a rule that you're not allowed to have music players at school, so I knew we were cooked. Mrs. Craig hauled me and Rowley down to her office to give us a good talking to.

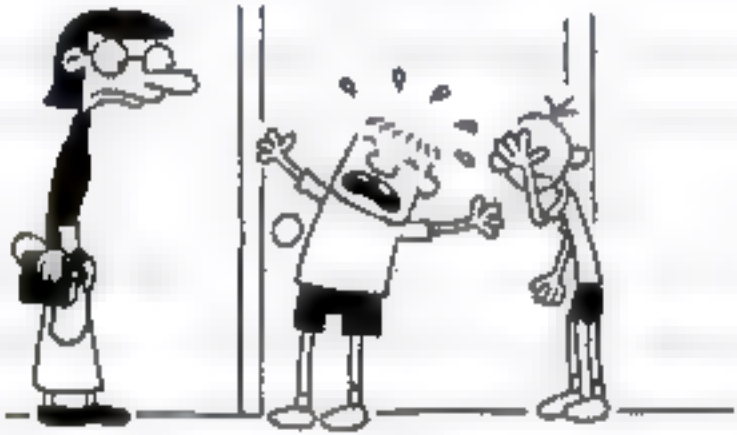
I think she had the wrong idea about what we were doing out there, because she started giving us this big lecture about how rock and roll is going to ruin our brains.



I don't think she realized we weren't actually listening to music. But I know how teachers are, and I knew she wouldn't want to hear any excuses, no matter how valid they were. So I just looked down like I was ashamed and said, "Yes Ma'am," and that seemed to calm her down.

In fact, it worked so well that Mrs. Craig let us go without any punishment at all. I was really relieved, because it seemed like she was about five seconds from calling our parents.

But just as I was walking out the door, Rowley starts blubbering to Mrs. Craig about how he doesn't want to ruin his "brains."



It was a little more than I could take. Right about the time that Mrs. Craig was hugging Rowley and telling him it was going to be o.k., I slipped out the door as quietly as I could.

Wednesday, November 10th

Tonight, I realized that if I didn't listen to Rodrick's CD soon, he was going to notice it was missing. So I decided it was time to take drastic action.

I waited until everyone went to bed, then I snuck downstairs and put the CD in the family room stereo.

I put Rodrick's headphones on, cranked up the volume really high, then hit "Play."

Well, just from the first few words of the first song, I could see why the Parents' Advisory label was on there. But I only got to hear about 10 more seconds before I was stopped cold.

It turns out I didn't have the headphones plugged in to the stereo. So the music I was hearing was actually coming through the speakers, not the headphones.

And unfortunately for me, that meant everyone else in the house was hearing the music, too.

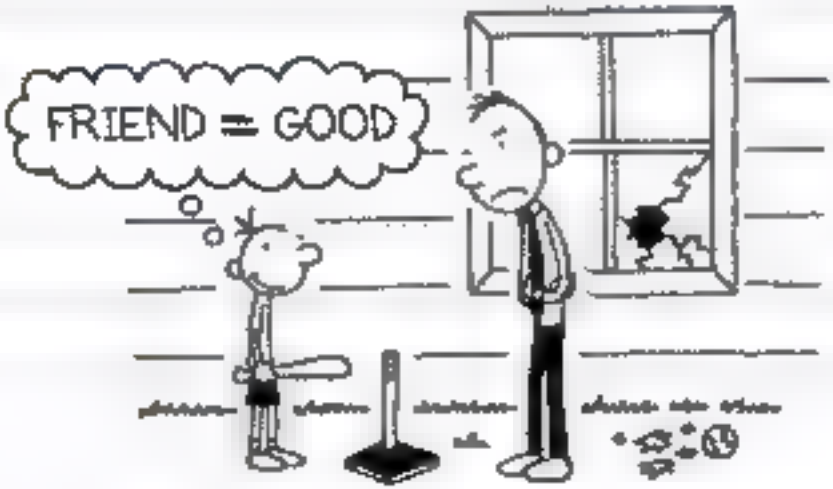
Boy, I have never seen Dad so mad. I don't know if he was more mad that I was listening to Rodrick's music or that I had woken him up.

Dad marched me up to my room and shut the door behind him.

Whenever Dad uses the word "friend" like that, you know you're really in trouble.

I used to not understand that Dad was just being sarcastic when he said "friend."

I remember the first time he said "friend" like that, and I totally let my guard down.



I don't make that mistake anymore.

So tonight Dad yelled at me for about ten minutes, and then I guess he decided he'd rather be in bed than standing in my room hollering at me.

He told me I was grounded for a week from playing video games, which is about what I expected. If Dad doesn't toss something at you right away, it's pretty much guaranteed that it's going to be the grounded-from-video-games thing.

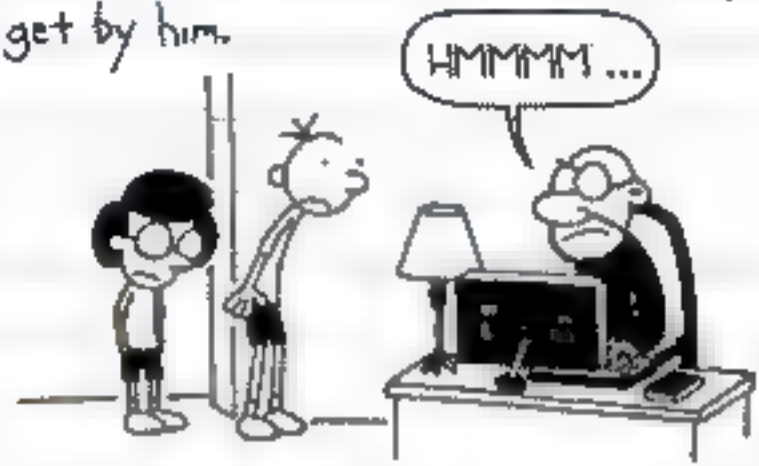
The thing that really stinks is that I wasn't thinking that tomorrow is a school holiday.

So if had just waited 12 hours, I could have listened to Rodrick's CD while Mom and Dad were at work.

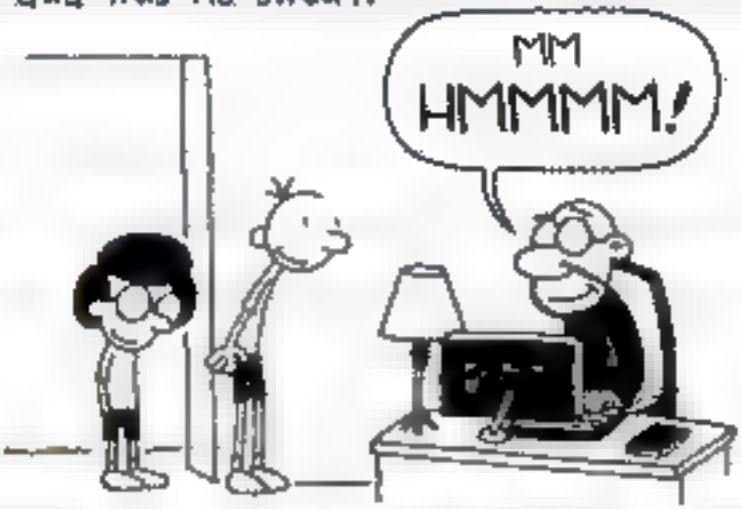
Thursday, November 11th

Well, I'm grounded from using my video game system again, which always means the same thing: time to start hanging out at Collin's. So I gathered up all my games and headed down to Collin's house this morning.

The only problem with going over to Collin's these days is that his dad started working at home, which is really annoying. Whenever I come by with a video game, he looks it up on some parents' site on the internet where they list all the bad things that happen in the game. And most of my games don't get by him.



But today I got smart. I put all my game discs in Manny's educational game cases, so getting by Collin's dad was no sweat.



When Dad got home from work tonight, he was in a good mood, which was a relief. I'm counting on Dad to forget about the video game ban within a couple of days. He's not good at remembering punishments or even the things you did wrong to get punished in the first place. That's why I'm glad Dad caught me listening to Rodrick's music, and not Mom.

When it comes to that sort of thing, Mom has a memory like an elephant. I got reminded of that fact when I came home from Collin's today, after cutting through the Smedley's back yard.

Even though I was out of the woods with Dad, Mom was still pretty hot at me for disobeying her and listening to Rodrick's CDs.

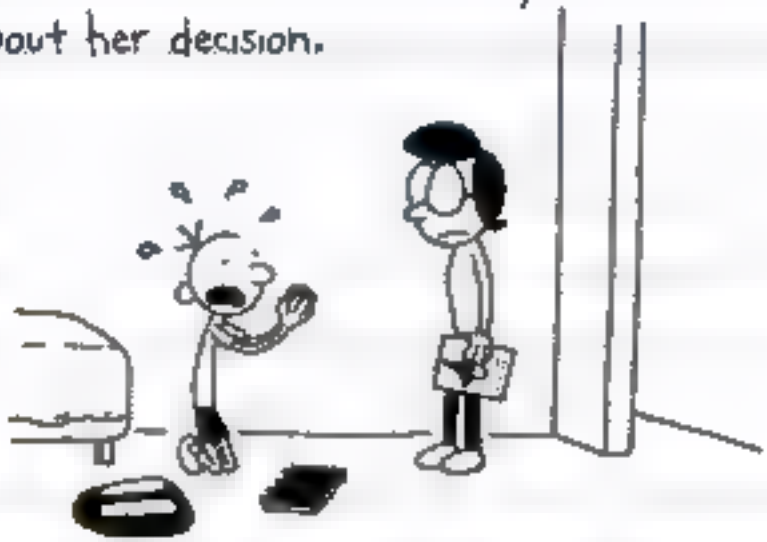
So on top of the video game ban, I figured she might throw in something a little extra to make sure I learned my lesson.

And sure enough, Mom came into my room tonight holding a bright green flyer from school, which I recognized right away. It was a casting call for the play "The Wizard of Oz," which they are going to do at my school.

At first, I thought Mom was going to tell me I was going to have to be in the play, which believe me, would have REALLY made me learn my lesson about disobeying her.

But then after a big speech, Mom told me I was NOT allowed to be in the play. I couldn't believe my luck.

And I have to admit, I played it perfectly. I started begging to be in the play, but Mom was firm about her decision.



So now, everyone was happy. I didn't have to be in a stupid play, Mom was satisfied I learned my lesson, and Dad had moved past the whole thing.

But I think I should have hid my joy a little better, or at least waited a little longer to do it. Because after Mom left my room, I kind of let loose.

When I noticed Mom standing in my doorway, I tried to switch gears back to "sad" mode, but she wasn't buying it.

She told me that she had changed her mind, and now I HAVE to be in the play. And no amount of begging would make her change her mind.

Friday, November 12th

I found out one good thing about being in the school play: it gets you out of soccer practice.

When Dad found out Mom was making me try out for the Wizard of Oz, he got into a big argument with her. Dad said I needed as much "field time" as possible, but Mom said I needed to be more "well rounded."

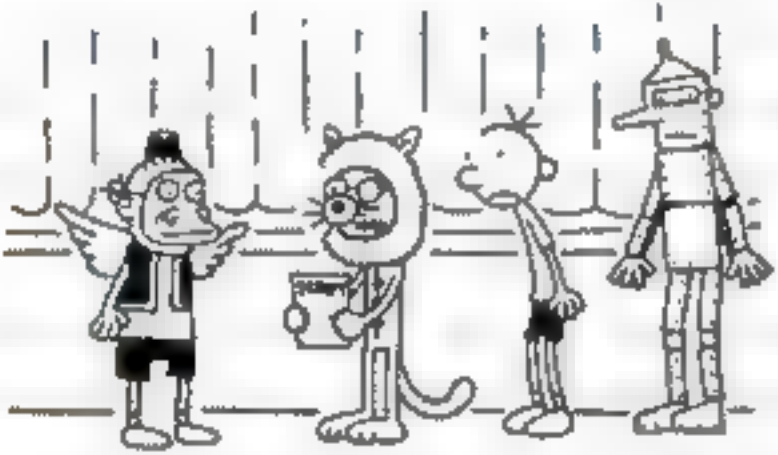
I honestly didn't know which one sounded worse, so I just kept out of it.

Of course Mom won out, so she drove me to the school for play tryouts.

On the car ride to school, Mom was being real chatty with me. But I made sure to act as grumpy as possible, so she couldn't get any satisfaction. At one point, Mom sneezed, and I told her not to sneeze so loud. But here's how she responded:

Man, she's good at laying on a guilt trip. It was impossible to act crabby for the rest of the car ride after that comment. If I ever have kids, I'm going to have to learn some tricks like that.

Tryouts were really weird. A lot of kids came in costumes for the parts they were trying out for. I've never seen the Wizard of Oz, so for me, it was like stepping into a freak show.

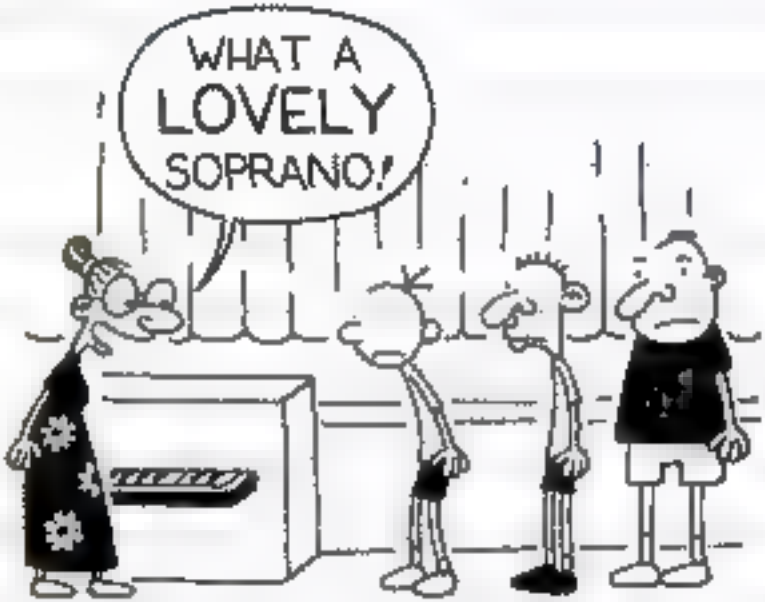


The play's director, Mrs. Norton, made everyone sing "My Country Tis of Thee" to test our singing voices.

If I had any idea this was going to be a SINGING play, believe me, I never would have gotten out of the car.

I ended up doing my singing tryout with a bunch of other boys whose moms made them come, too.

I tried to sing as quietly as possible, but I got singled out anyway.



I have no idea what a "soprano" is, but from the way the girls were giggling I could tell it is not a good thing.

Tryouts went on and on. The grand finale came when Mrs. Norton started casting for the part of Dorothy, which I guess is the lead part in the play.

And who should try out first but Patty Farrell, the girl who sold me out in Social Studies.

I still have a serious bone to pick with Patty. I haven't come up with a way to get revenge for when she made me fail my state capitals test, but maybe this play will give me the opportunity to get even.

My first thought was to try out for the part of the Witch, because I heard that in the play, the Witch gets to do all sorts of mean things to Dorothy.

But then somebody told me there's a Witch that hates her and one who likes her.

And with my luck, I'd end up getting cast as the one who likes her.

Saturday, November 13th

HUGE shocker at the soccer game today. Right before game time, the coach on the other team caught Ian, our goalie, DRIVING to the game.

So the guy IS four years older than the rest of us. Who knew?

To be honest, though, I was starting to wonder what a so-called 12-year-old was doing with a five o'clock shadow.

I was hoping this meant our whole team would get suspended, but after a few minutes of the coaches and the ref arguing, Ian got sent packing on his own.

I have no idea why a 16-year-old would want to be on a soccer team with a bunch of seventh graders.

But I have a feeling Mr. Keith brought him on as a ringer for extra insurance to make sure we win the league title.

The funny thing is, while all of this was going on, it never occurred to me that I was now offically the team's goalie.

I guess Mr. Keith realized it didn't really matter who played goalie, since the ball has only gotten to that part of the field once this whole season.

But Dad was REALLY excited about my new position. He spent the whole game coaching me from the sidelines, which was really annoying. All I wanted to do was to play in the anthills that are all over that half of the field, but I couldn't break loose from Dad's attention.

Like I predicted, I never touched the ball. But on the car ride home, Dad was acting really proud of me.

I think I might be able to make this goalie thing work in my favor.

I've heard Dad talking to Mom about Bishop Garrigan again lately. Dad still wants me to go to this all-boys school for high school, even though I want to go to Crossland, which is co-ed.

Bishop Garrigan doesn't have a soccer team, but Crossland does. So if I can play up this "star goalie" thing, it might just be my ticket out of a bad situation.

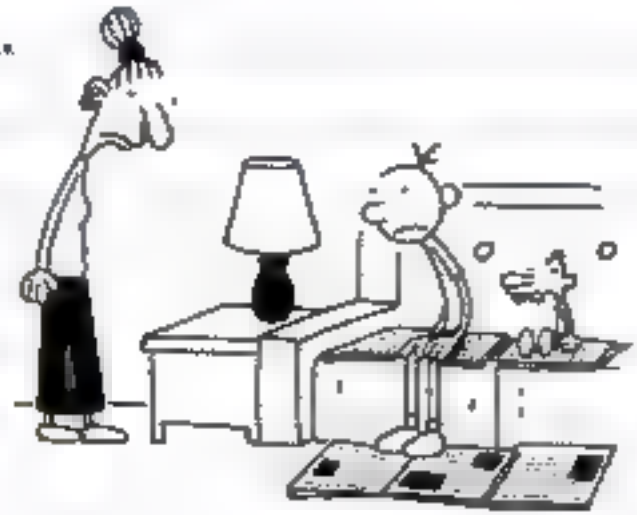
Sunday, November 14th

I was all set to go play video games over at Collin's house today, when Mom and Dad broadsided me with some bad news: I was going to have to stay at Aunt Cakey's with Manny for two days. Mom and Dad were going off on a college-finding trip with Rodrick, even though he has already said he's not going to college.

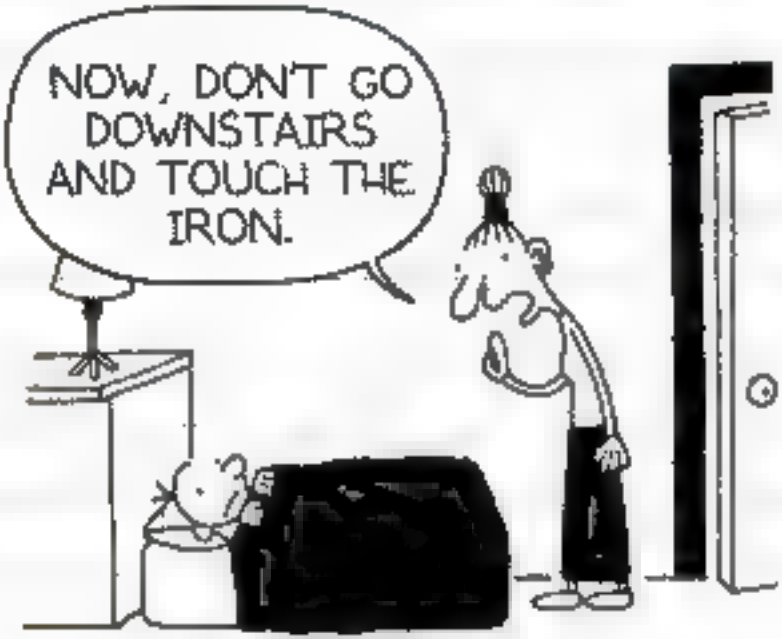
The thing that makes going to Aunt Cakey's house such a drag is that she doesn't like kids AT ALL. She even seems immune to Manny's whole act.

Mom and Dad dropped us off at Aunt Cakey's house at about 2:00. I'm still grounded, so I wasn't allowed to bring my video game system. Aunt Cakey's house doesn't have any toys and no t.v., so being sent there without your video games is like a prison sentence.

Aunt Cakey always lays down newspapers and plastic sheets when she knows we're coming, like we're some kind of wild animals who are going to chew up her furniture. Then she just stands there and watches us to make sure we don't break anything.



I think I'm actually part of the reason Aunt Cakey doesn't trust kids. One time, when I was about five, I spent the night at her house. Aunt Cakey had been ironing some clothes downstairs, so when she put me to bed and went to turn out the light, she said:



Up to that point, the thought had never crossed my mind. But once she put it in my head, I couldn't think of anything else.

So after Aunt Cakey walked out of the room, I snuck downstairs like I was on some kind of stealth mission. And when I got into the laundry room, I put my whole hand on the iron.

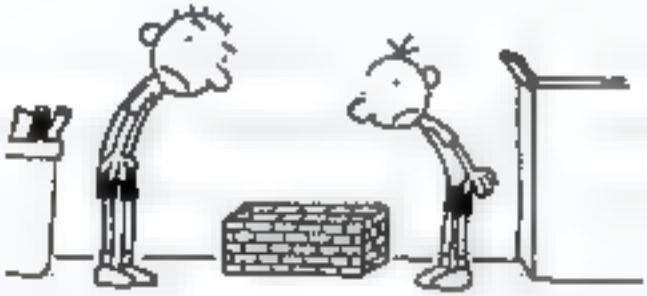
I got a second-degree burn, and the whole incident put Aunt Cakey in the dog house with Mom.

So I think that's one of the reasons Aunt Cakey doesn't let us out of her sight when we come over.

Monday, November 15th

Yesterday, I said that Aunt Cakey doesn't have any toys, but that's not actually true. About five years ago Mom bought a bunch of Legos and gave them to Aunt Cakey to have for us when we came for a visit.

Aunt Cakey didn't like having lots of pieces everywhere, so her solution was to glue all the Legos together in one giant block and put it down in her basement.



Last year during a visit to Aunt Cakey's, I was rooting around looking for something else to do and I found an old Monopoly board game.

The box must have been something like 25 years old. I was just happy to find something other than the block of Legos to play with.

But when I opened up the box, it was completely FULL of cricket spiders. I guess they were using it as a giant nest. And for the record, that's the first time in my life I fainted.

So I don't even go down in Aunt Cakey's basement anymore. And to this day, whenever I lift the top off of a board game, I break out into a cold sweat.

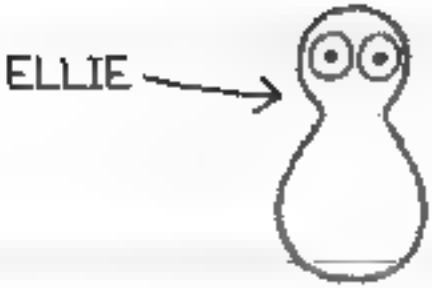
It was boredom at Aunt Cakey's that actually led me to my whole ant obsession.

Since me and Rodrick could never find anything to do, we would always just go outside and toy with the ants in her back yard.

But even that gets old after a while. Yesterday I made the mistake of telling Aunt Cakey I was bored, and I wished I could take it back.

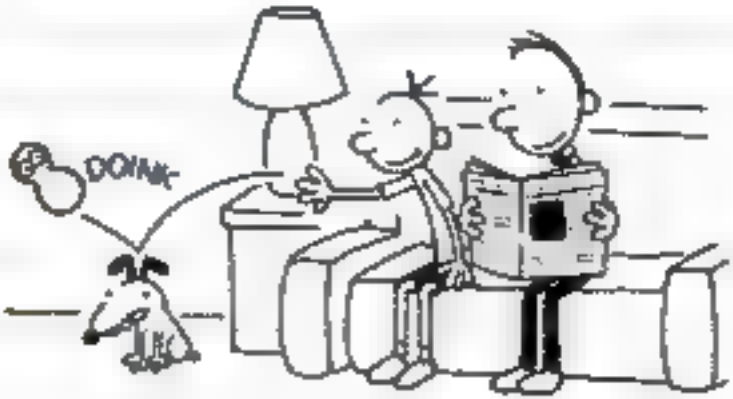
So today I kept my mouth shut. To keep myself amused, I made up a game where I tried to see how close to the ceiling I could throw this old stuffed animal.

The stuffed animal I played with is called "Ellie" and it used to belong to Aunt Cakey's dog, Rudy. I think Ellie used to be an elephant but Rudy chewed the ears and trunk off.



Rudy passed away a couple years ago. Aunt Cakey's house wasn't so boring when Rudy was around.

Rudy was the most clueless dog alive. You could do just about anything to that dog, and he would just go on staring out into space like nothing happened.



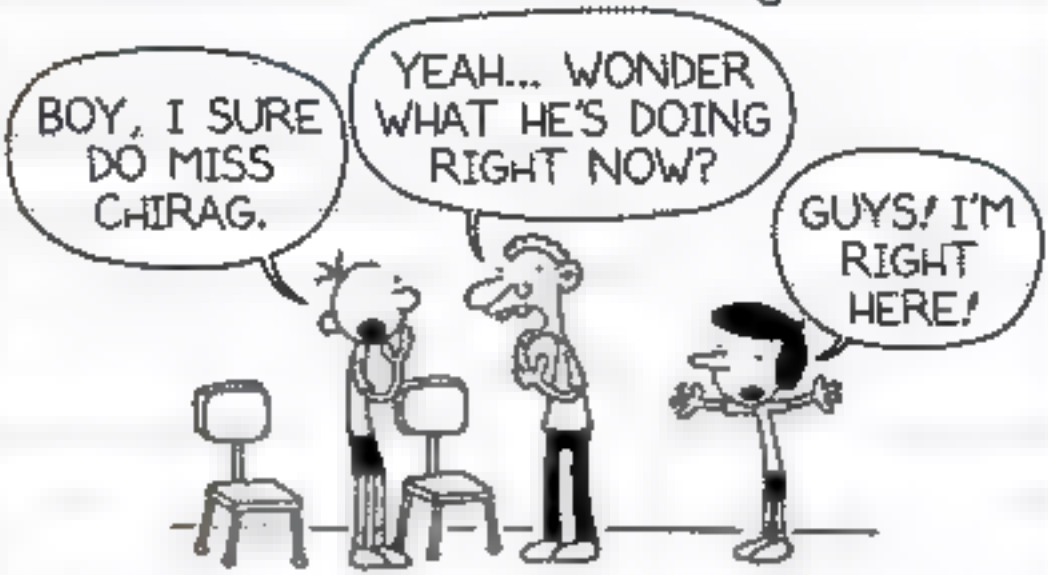
The only thing that could get Rudy moving was if you made this certain sound with your lips. He would get so scared that he would hide under a bed and stay there for the whole day.

But before you judge me or say I'm a bad person for doing that to Rudy, let me just say that I saw Gramma using that trick to get Rudy out of her way a bunch of times. And she's going to heaven, for sure.

Tuesday, November 16th

Today at school, guess who showed back up in class? Chirag, the kid who had a going-away party last week.

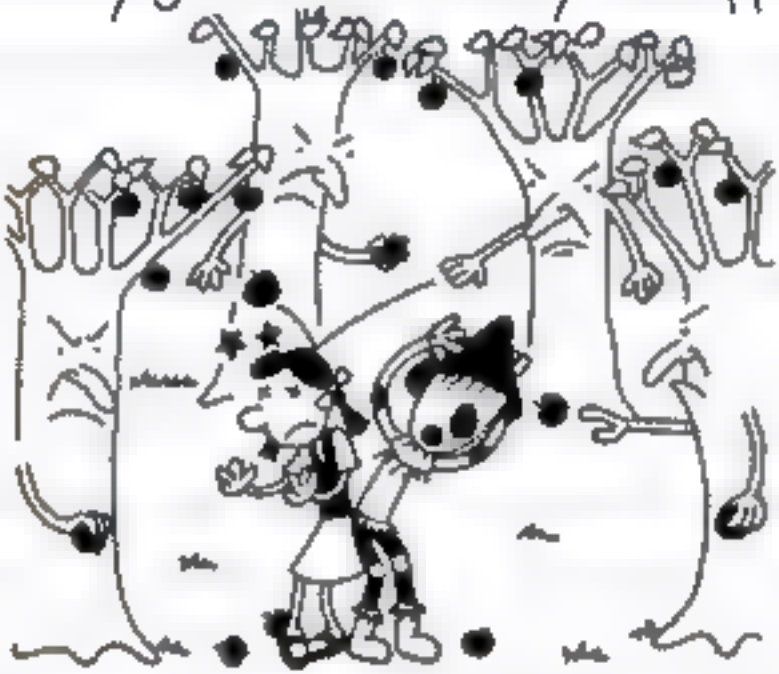
It turns out Chirag's dad decided not to take that job in California, so Chirag isn't moving after all. Everyone was pretty glad Chirag was sticking around, especially after that awesome party he had. But a couple of us decided to have a little fun with him before welcoming him back.



We kept that sort of thing up the whole day. I don't know when we'll finally let him off the hook, but this Invisible Chirag thing has the makings of a classic. It could be even better than the P.U. thing with Peter Utiger.

Today we had a general assembly where they showed the Wizard of Oz movie, to get everyone excited about the play. At least now I know the story and what characters I should avoid trying out for.

Pretty much every character in the movie has to sing or skip along with Dorothy at one point or another, so that really limits my options. But about a third of the way into the movie, I figured out the part for me. I'm going to try out to be a Tree, because 1)they don't have to sing and 2)they get to bean Dorothy with apples.

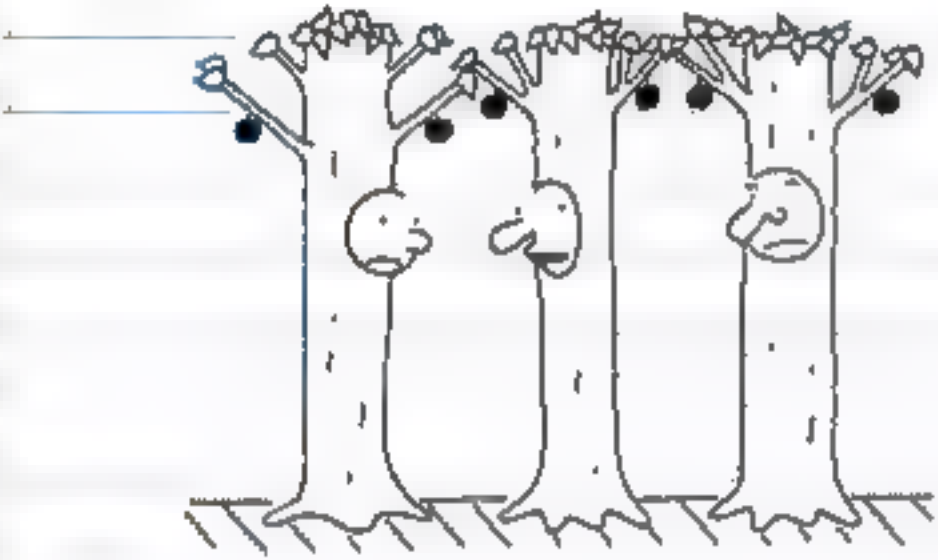


Getting to chuck apples at Patty Farrell in front of a live audience would be like a dream come true. So I'm crossing my fingers that I get the part.

Wednesday, November 17th

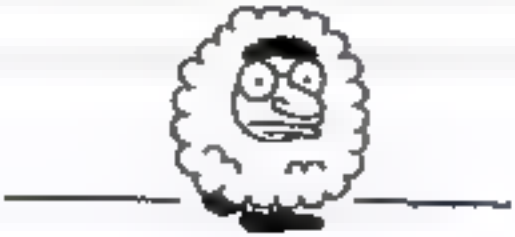
Well, like Mom always says, be careful what you wish for. Today I tried out for the part of a Tree, and I got it. At first, I didn't think I was going to get the part, because after seeing the movie yesterday, about half the guys in the play had the same idea I had.

The only problem was that whoever made the costumes didn't think to make arm holes.



And Mrs. Norton said the apple-throwing part has been cut out of the play anyway because it's "too violent."

I guess I should feel lucky that I got an actual speaking part. They had too many kids trying out, and not enough parts. So Rodney James ended up getting assigned the role of the Shrub.



Thursday, November 18th

Today I took the "Invisible Chirag" thing another step further.

In the cafeteria, I made a big deal over the fact that I had an extra chocolate chip cookie in my lunch bag.

I can't take full credit for the Invisible Chirag thing. The idea actually came from Mom.

On a snowy day a long time ago, I was playing under the kitchen table, and Mom came looking for me.

I don't really know why I did it, but I decided to stay hidden while Mom looked for me. So she went all around the house calling my name.

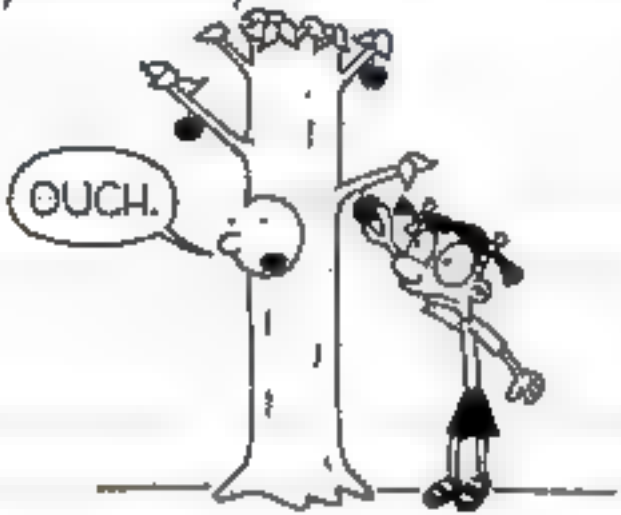
Looking back, I think she must have heard me giggling under the table and caught on to the fact that I was hiding from her. But she pretended like she still didn't know where I was.

The thought of me being all alone in the wilderness got me a little choked up. But what finally busted me up was when Mom said she was going to have to give my giant jar of Gummi Bears to Rodrick.

So if I ever get nabbed for pulling the same kind of trick on Chirag, maybe Mom will show a little leniency.

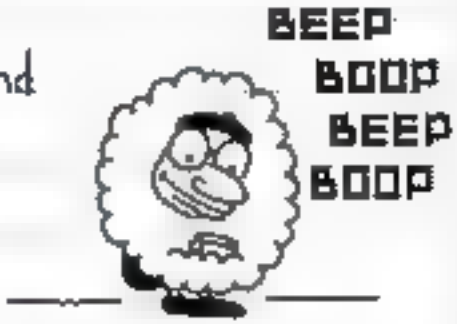
Today after school we had our first full practice for the school play, and I'm starting to wonder which is worse, the play or soccer.

The other day I was saying how I was lucky I got a speaking part. But today, I found out that I only get to say one line in the whole play:



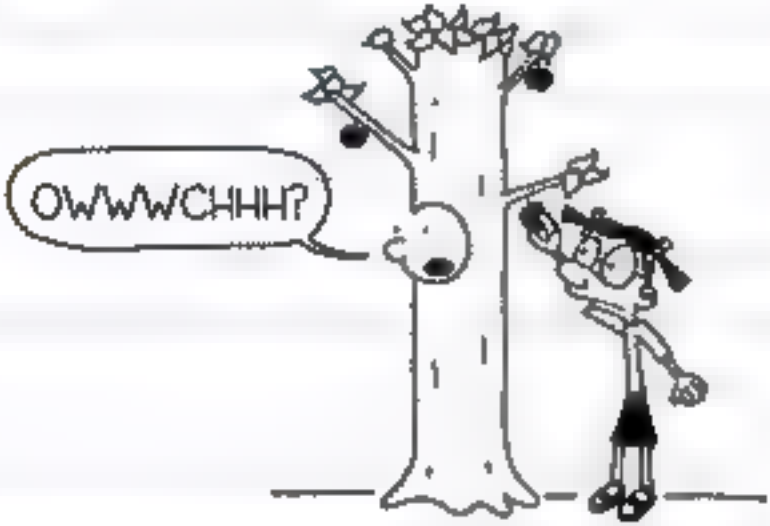
That means I have to go to a two-hour practice each day just so I can say one stupid word. I'm starting to think that Rodney James got the better deal as the Shrub.

I noticed today that he found a way to sneak a Game Boy into his costume, which must really make the time go by.



So now I'm trying to think of ways to get Mrs. Norton to kick me out of the play.

But when you have so little dialogue to work with, it's really hard to mess up your lines.



Friday, November 19th

When Rodrick picked me up after play practice today, he told me to get in the back of the car, because he had a "guest." But I didn't see Ward in the passenger seat, so I went around the car to see what Rodrick was talking about.

Ellie! Rodrick had Rudy's old chew toy propped up in the passenger seat.

And the only reason Rodrick put Ellie there was to block me from sitting in the front seat with him.

I knocked on the window to make Rodrick let me in, but he wouldn't unlock the door. After a couple of minutes of this, the cars behind us started honking because we were blocking their way.

I had to climb into the back of Rodrick's car, so a stuffed animal could ride in the front. It was freezing out, and I was only wearing shorts, because those Tree costumes don't have any ventilation and you have to dress light. When it started to rain, I had to pull the tarp down over myself to keep dry.

Unfortunately, Patty Farrell was in a car right behind us the whole way home, so she got to see me in a pretty embarrassing situation.

When we pulled into the driveway and got out of the car, me and Rodrick really got into it. I called him the worst name I could think of, and he pushed me down into a puddle.

But Mom saw the whole thing and broke it up before I could really let Rodrick have it.

Mom said me and Rodrick were going to have to settle this in a "civil manner," and she said that we were going to have a "Summit" later on in the evening.

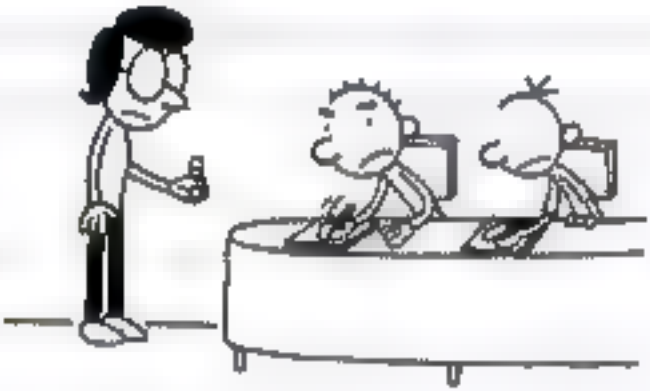
After dinner, we found out what that meant. Mom sat me and Rodrick down at the kitchen table and gave us each a pen and a piece of paper.

I knew what she was up to right away. Mom used to work as a preschool teacher. Whenever a kid did something bad, she'd write the bad thing that the kid did, and then she'd make the kid draw a picture to go along with the sentence.

The idea was to make the kid feel ashamed of the bad thing they did so they wouldn't do it again.

I remember the idea working pretty well on me.

Mom gave me and Rodrick a three-minute time limit and we got to drawing.



Here's what we came up with:

Now, I'm just going to assume that Rodrick spelled my name wrong in the drawing to get me extra mad. Because the alternative is just too depressing.

Anyway, Mom gave up on our "Summit" after seeing the drawings.

I guess she was satisfied with the fact that me and Rodrick could sit next to each other for three minutes without strangling each other.

Saturday, November 20th

Mom has decided that she's had enough of me and Rodrick not getting along. So she made a list of all the situations that cause "friction" between the two of us, and she said she's going to eliminate those types of situations one by one.

The first rule she made was that from now on, whenever we get a new box of cereal, Mom is going to throw away the prize that comes with it. That's fine with me. I never get the prize anyway, because Rodrick always opens the box first. And the way he digs around for it with bare hands, it makes me not want the cereal anyway.

Even though Mom made that rule, Rodrick still figured out a way to annoy me. When Rodrick poured the first bowl of cereal today, all that came out of the box was marshmallows.

Rodrick must have sorted through all the cereal to pick out the marshmallows before I even sat down.

I'm starting to think Mom's rules are actually going to cause more friction than we had before.

I was happy to let Rodrick eat all the marshmallows, anyway. One time when I slept over at Gramma's I ate just the marshmallows out of a box of junk cereal. And in the middle of gym class that day, I practically passed out from stomach cramps.

So the school had to call Dad at work and tell him to come pick me up.

But I wasn't about to tell Dad the real reason he had to pick me up. So I made up some story and actually turned it in my favor.

One good thing about today: no soccer game. So for the first time in a long time, I could kick up my feet on a Saturday afternoon. Our team is in the playoffs, and the first game is tomorrow. So five more games until the championship match, and then I'm done for the year.

Sunday, November 21st

Well, guess what? My soccer season is over. Our team lost the first game of the playoffs today, so we're out of the tournament.

And of course since I was the goalie I got blamed for our team getting eliminated. I only got one goal scored on me, but that didn't seem to matter to Mr. Keith and all of the goons on the team. In fact I practically got run off the field when the game ended.

Luckily Dad wasn't around to see the game, because he was a reader at church today.

When I told Dad about the game, he was actually pretty calm about it. I figured he might be mad or at least disappointed. But I have to give him credit on this one. He was a little sad at first but then he seemed o.k. with it.

It's a good thing, too, because now I have a lot more serious things to worry about than Dad's feelings about my goalie skills.

The guys on my team were so hot at me that I figure I better start looking into how I can transfer to another school.

I've thought about coming up with some sort of a disguise to get me through the rest of the school year, but I don't think it would work out. A week ago, I'll bet half the guys on my soccer team wouldn't have even recognized me if they ran into me at school. But believe me, they would now.

Monday, November 22nd

Today in Science class I almost blew the Invisible Chirag gag, not once, but twice.

The teacher asked me to count the number of kids in the classroom so she'd know how many safety goggles to get out of the closet. So I made a big show of counting everyone in the room except Chirag, because of course I always pretend I can't see him.

Well, for some reason, this was the straw that broke the camel's back. Chirag got up in my face and started yelling, and it was all I could do to just stare into space like I didn't hear or see a thing.

I wanted to explain to him that we never said he wasn't a human being, we just said that he's an INVISIBLE human being.

But luckily I was able to stop myself from saying something, which would have ruined the joke.

The other thing that threw me for a loop was that the teacher assigned Chirag to be one of my lab partners, along with Giles Hugglestone. Our assignment was to dissect a frog, and it was pretty clear that neither me nor Giles was going to touch the thing. So we had to figure out a way to get Chirag to do all our dirty work without breaking the joke.

Luckily Chirag cared more about his lab grade than our joke, so he came through for our lab group. But I really don't know how much longer I can keep this joke going.

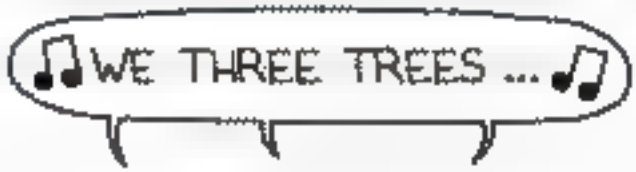
After school today, we had our last Wizard of Oz practice before the show, which is supposed to be tomorrow night. I have no idea how we are going to pull this play off. First of all, nobody has bothered to learn their lines, because during rehearsal, Mrs. Norton whispers everyone's lines to them from the side of the stage.

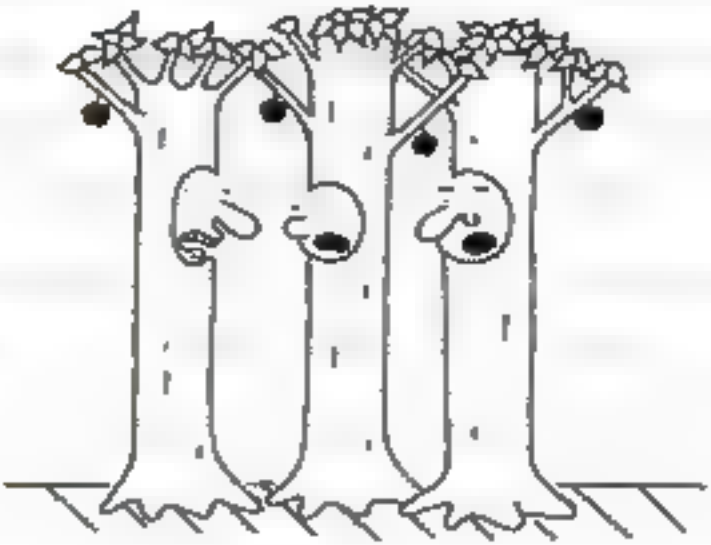
I wonder how it's going to be tomorrow night when Mrs. Norton is sitting at her piano 30 feet away from the stage. Another thing that's making things difficult is that Mrs. Norton keeps adding new scenes and even new actors. She brought in some kid from the kindergarten to play Toto, Dorothy's dog. But the kid's mom insisted that Toto walks around on two legs, because crawling around on all fours would be too "degrading."

As far as "degrading" goes, she should have thought of that before signing up her kid to dress as a Scottish Terrier in front of 300 people.

If I know anything at all, that kid's classmates are still going to be calling him Toto when he's in eighth grade.

But the worst thing of all was that Mrs. Norton actually wrote a song that us TREES are going to have to sing. She said everyone "deserved" a chance to sing in the play, and then spent a half hour teaching us what must be the worst song ever written.





The only good thing I can think of about the song is that Rodrick won't be at the play to witness my humiliation. Mrs. Norton decided that the play was going to be a "semi-formal" occasion, and I know there's no way Rodrick is going to wear a tie for some dumb middle school play.

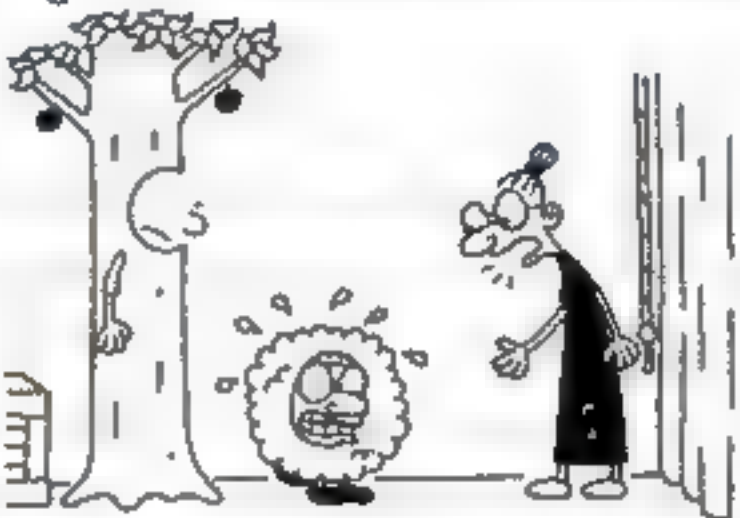
After we practiced our song, Archie Kelly tripped over Rodney James and he chipped his tooth because he couldn't stick out his arms to break his fall. We'll have to see if Archie will stay in the play or if Mrs. Norton is going to change the song to "We Two Trees."

Tuesday, November 23rd

Tonight was the school play, and it was a train wreck. The first sign of bad things to come happened before the play started. I was peeking out from behind the curtain to scope out the crowd, and guess who walked in? Rodrick, wearing a clip-on tie. I thought for sure the dress code would keep Rodrick at home. But I guess the prospect of seeing me sing a song in a paper mache tree suit made it worth his while.

Rodrick parked himself in the front row to make sure his view of the whole humiliating ordeal would be unobstructed.

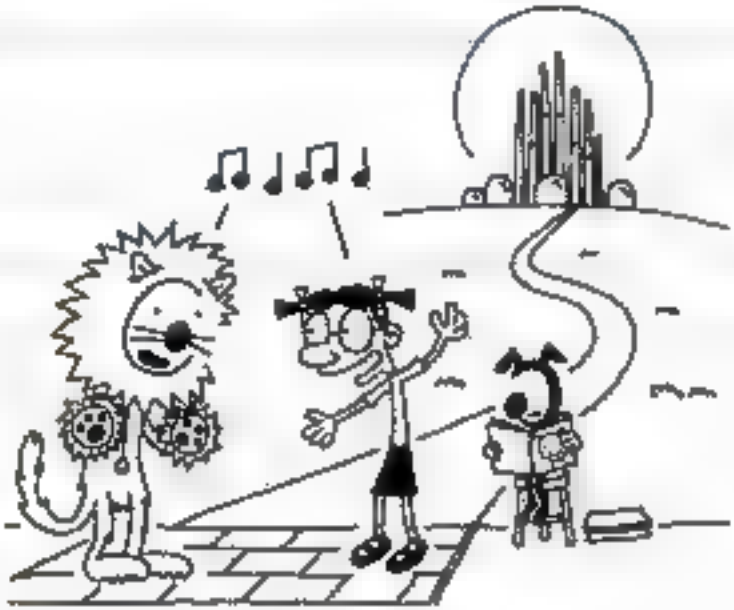
The play was delayed by 20 minutes while Mrs. Norton tried to talk Rodney James out of his stage fright.



You'd figure that someone whose job is to play a Shrub could just suck it up for one performance, but there was nothing Mrs. Norton could say that would get Rodney to budge. I thought about faking stage fright to get out of the play, but I'd have to be a professional actor before I could pull off the same kind of look Rodney had on his face.

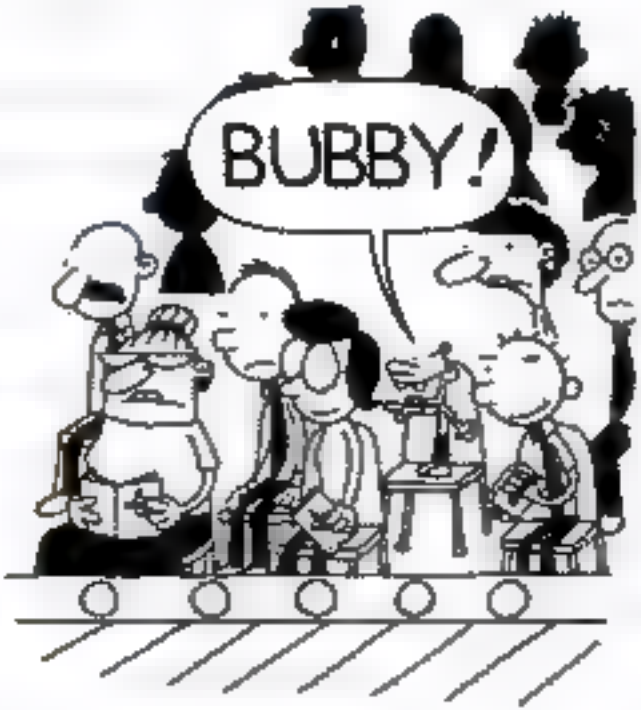
Most of the play was pretty uneventful. No one knew their lines, just like I predicted, but Mrs. Norton kept things moving along with her piano.

It turns out that bringing that kid in to play Toto was a pretty big mistake. During the parts when he didn't have to move, he'd just sit on a stool and read his comic books, which kind of ruined the whole "dog" effect.



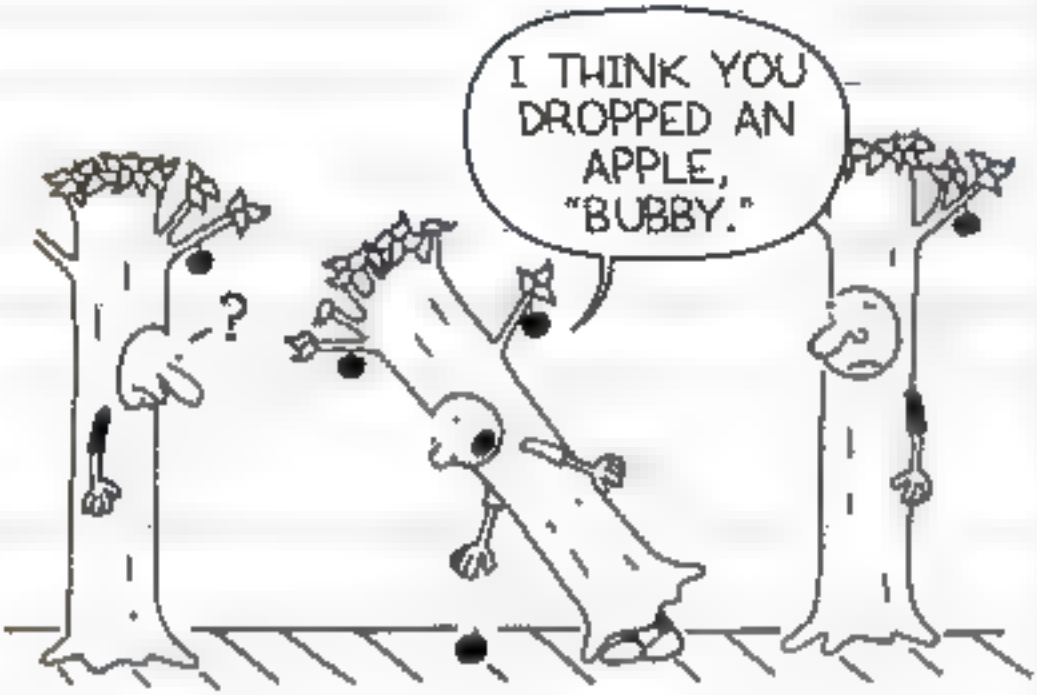
When it was finally time for the Forest scene to start, me and the other Trees waddled to our places like a bunch of penguins.

The lights went on and the curtains rose, and the first thing I heard was Manny's voice, loud enough for everyone in the whole auditorium to hear.



I've been able to keep that nickname secret for five years, and now all of the sudden the whole town knew it. Manny's outburst got a bigger reaction from the crowd than anything that had happened in the play. Everyone was snickering, and I could feel 600 eyeballs all pointed my way.

But I did some quick ad libbing and I was able to deflect the embarassment over to Archie Kelly.



But the major embarassment was still on the way. When I heard Mrs. Norton playing the first few bars of "We Three Trees," I knew it was time to face my doom.

Before we started singing, I noticed Rodrick in the front row, holding a video camera. And it was pointed straight at me.

Rodrick must have realized this was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to catch me making a fool out of myself, so he somehow got a hold of a camera to capture the occasion.

My life flashed before my eyes, and I thought of all the embarrassing things I had ever done that were caught on videotape.

My most embarrassing moment is captured on a videotape labeled "First Flush." For some reason, Mom thought it would be a good idea to tape my potty training so that I would always have a record of that "precious moment."

The only person who has ever found that moment to be "precious" is Rodrick, who pulls the tape out every time the whole family gets together for a holiday. One time I even threw the tape away, but Rodrick had a duplicate.

I knew my singing debut was going to give Rodrick ammunition for many family holidays to come. So I had to make a decision.

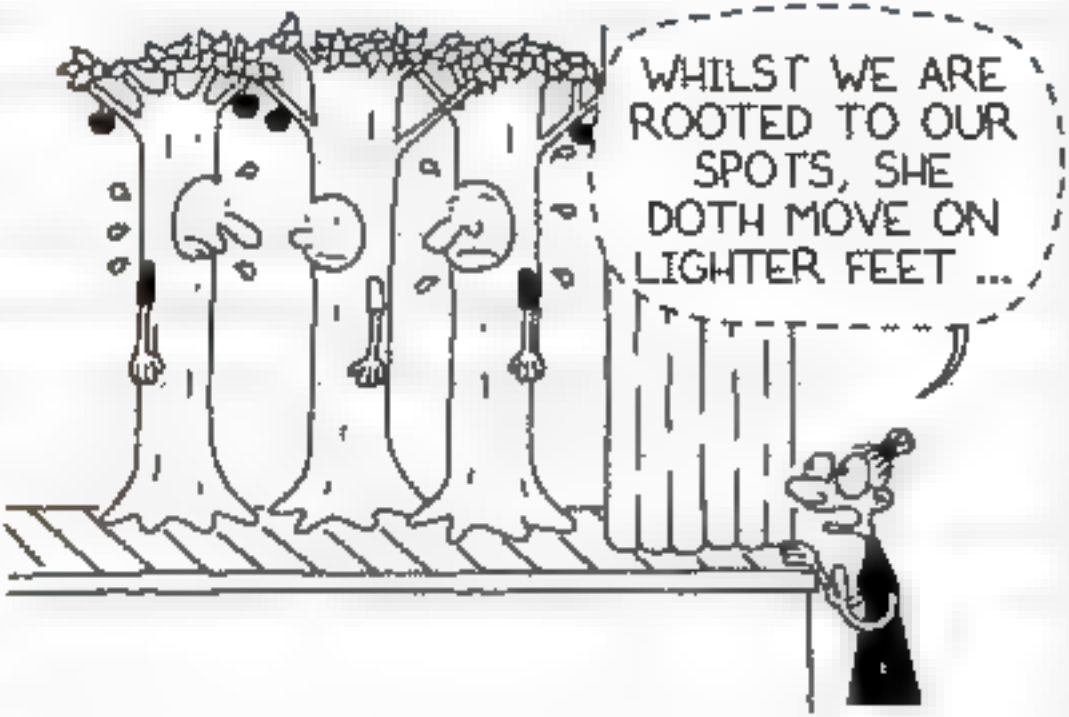
When it came time to sing the song, Archie Kelly and D.J. Harold started belting it out, but I just kept my lips shut.

I decided it would be better to look a little silly on stage tonight than to look stupid at every family holiday until the end of time.

I thought my plan was pretty clever, but then it started to backfire. The other two Trees noticed that I wasn't doing any singing, and they didn't know what was up. I guess they must have thought I knew something that they didn't, which made them really nervous. So they started singing quieter and quieter until they stopped altogether.

So now you had the three of us standing up there, not making a peep. For my part, I was just praying the curtain would come down and we could waddle back off the stage.

But Mrs. Norton had other ideas. She must have thought we had all forgotten the words to the song, because she came over to the side of the stage and whispered the rest of the lyrics to us.



I could see people in the audience flipping through their programs, trying to figure out what the heck was going on.

I know the song is only something like three and a half minutes long, but to me, it felt like an hour and a half.

When Mrs. Norton finished, we took our bow, and the curtains finally came down. Nobody in the audience clapped, not even Mom.

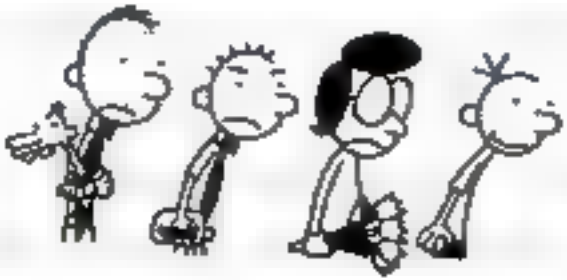
After the play ended, my family went home together.

Nobody really said much, except when Mom muttered something about the play being "interesting."

Manny was so spooked by the flying monkeys that he had to be carried out of the auditorium and wouldn't let anyone put him down.

Mom had brought a bouquet of flowers with her, which I think she had been planning on giving to me as a "congratulations" when the play ended, but luckily she didn't.

And Rodrick was super mad because aside from not getting to videotape me singing, a photographer from the local paper had taken a picture of the audience, and there he was in front row wearing a tie, for nothing.



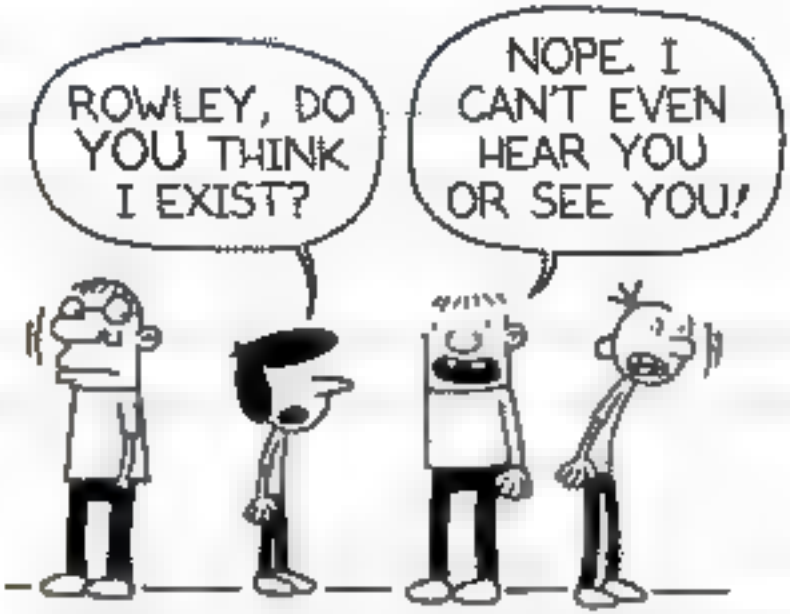
Wednesday, November 24th

At school today, I saw Archie Kelly getting hassled by a couple of eighth graders in the hallway.

I just walked on by and made sure to look straight ahead.

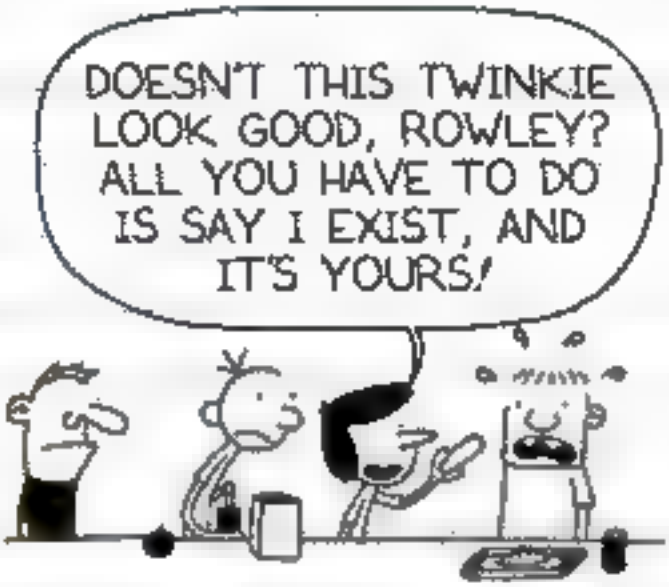
The rest of my day was pretty much taken up by trying to keep the Invisible Chirag joke from falling apart.

Just about everyone is in on the joke, even the girls. Chirag has pretty much given up on trying to get anyone to admit he exists, but today he found our weakest link: Rowley.



I had forgotten ALL about Rowley. When the joke first started out, we made sure to keep Rowley away from Chirag, because we knew he'd blow the joke. But we let our guard down, and now Chirag knew Rowley was an easy target.

Chirag sat right next to Rowley and went to work.



Chirag must have known that Rowley can't resist a Twinkie, and I could see that Rowley was on the verge of cracking.

So I jumped in and started making a big deal about the fact that there was a Floating Twinkie hovering above our lunch table.

And then I plucked it out of the air and ate it in two bites.

Well, this really set Chirag off. He started pounding on my back, but of course I had to pretend not to really notice.

I guess I played it off pretty well. But let me tell you, it wasn't easy. Chirag might be small, but he's a heck of a lot stronger than he looks.

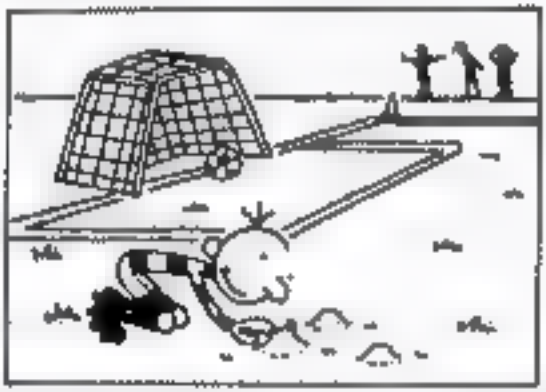
Even after getting punched a hundred times today, I was still in a pretty good mood when I got home. Soccer was over and so was the play, so my life was finally back to normal.

But then something happened that changed everything.

I saw that the weekly paper was in our mailbox, so I flipped through it to see if I could find the picture of Rodrick wearing a tie. He wasn't in it, but guess who was in a big picture in the sports section? Me.

I don't know if you believe in karma, but I felt like that picture was payback for every bad thing I've ever done in my life.

Ants in his pants



Red Socks goalie Greg Heffley leaves the goal unattended as a kick from midfield rolls in. The goal was the only point scored in the game, and the Wolverines went on to the second round of the playoffs.

The biggest problem was that I never told Dad why we really lost that game. So of course I ripped the Sports section up into really small pieces and flushed them down the toilet.

But it was too late. Apparently they get the paper at Dad's office, too, so the cat was out of the bag.

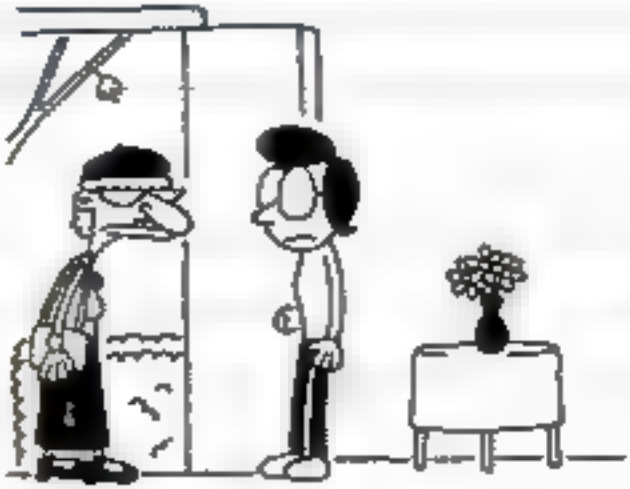
Dad really didn't say much to me tonight. After dinner, he went in his room, and I could hear him making some phone calls. After he came out of his room, I snuck in and hit the "redial" button.

And I can't say I'm surprised at the number he had last called. It was the answering machine for the admissions department at Bishop Garrigan High School.

Thursday, November 25th (Thanksgiving)

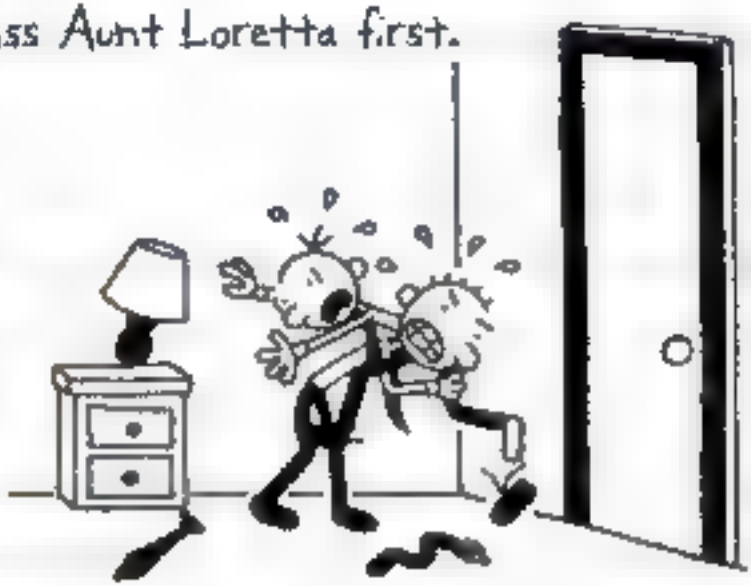
Well, luckily, the Bishop Garrigan people didn't return Dad's phone call today, because it was Thanksgiving. But the threat of being signed up for an all-boys' high school definitely put a damper on my holiday.

Thanksgiving started off like it always does: with Great Aunt Loretta showing up two hours early.



Mom called me and Rodrick downstairs to "greet" Aunt Loretta, which means kiss her hello.

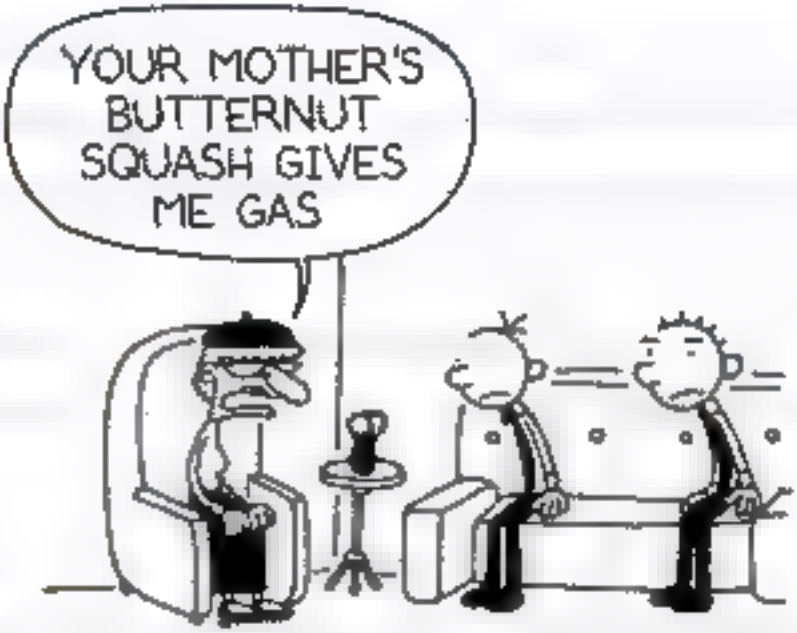
I'll tell you, some of the most epic battles me and Rodrick have ever had have been over who has to go kiss Aunt Loretta first.



I lost again today, but one day I'll be bigger than Rodrick and it'll be him puckering up for that first sloppy lipstick kiss instead of me.

What's even worse than having to kiss Aunt Loretta hello is the fact that we have to "entertain" her while Mom gets the dinner ready.

That means at least two hours of small talk with Aunt Loretta in the study. And believe me, me and Rodrick don't have a whole lot in common with Aunt Loretta, so there's not a lot to talk about.



The rest of the family started trickling in around 11:00. Uncle Joe and his family were the last ones to show up, at around 12:30.

Uncle Joe has a bunch of kids, and they all call Dad the same thing.

Mom thinks it's really cute, but Dad swears Uncle Joe tells his kids to do it on purpose just to get under his skin.

Dad is still mad at something Uncle Joe did at Thanksgiving three years ago.

Back then, Manny was still potty training, but he was doing really well. Mom and Dad were pretty happy their last kid was almost out of diapers.

But Uncle Joe said something to Manny when Manny was walking into the bathroom, and it changed everything.

All of Manny's progress went right out the window, and I think it was something like another year and a half before Manny would even go back in the bathroom by himself. Every time Dad changed a dirty diaper after that, I could hear him cursing Uncle Joe under his breath.

When dinner was ready, Mom called everyone into the dining room to sit down.

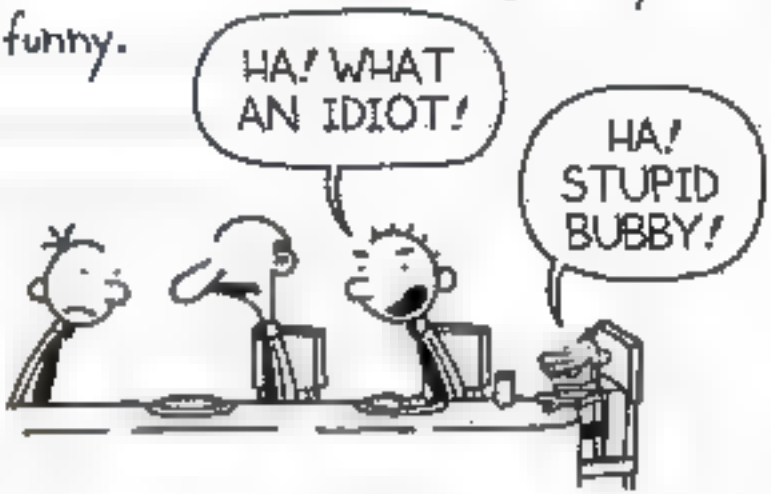
Grampa started into a story that he likes to tell whenever the whole family is together. The story is about something that happened when I was a little kid, and it's really embarrassing.

The story goes like this: One time, Pappy took me to Wild World, which is this big water park near my house. He told me to go ahead and ride the Lazy River ride while he sat on a lounge chair by the pool.

He came looking for me about 45 minutes later, and I was still standing by the entrance to the ride. There was a sign that said: Under 48" Must Be Accompanied By An Adult.

Now, nobody ever told me that a quotation mark meant "inches." So I thought you had to be 48 years old to ride by yourself, which is why I didn't go on.

I guess it's a pretty funny story and all, but it would be a whole lot funnier if I hadn't heard it 200 times. But the way Rodrick laughs at that story, you would think he'd never heard it before. And now Manny's in on the act, too, even though I'm sure he doesn't even get why the story is funny.



Rodrick can usually get Grampa to repeat that story at least two more times during the Thanksgiving meal, which is what he did today.

Speaking of Grampa, after dinner, Mom caught him smoking a cigar in the bathroom.

Grampa isn't supposed to smoke, and he's definitely not allowed to smoke in the house. He was blowing the smoke into the vent so that he wouldn't get caught, but he got nailed anyway.

Mom said she barged in on Grampa because she could smell a "foul odor" coming out of the bathroom.

That seems like a risky thing to do to me. If Grampa was in the bathroom and I smelled a "foul odor," believe me, busting down the door would be the last thing I'd do.

And speaking of getting caught, I walked into an awkward situation later on.

Mom asked me to put the garbage out in the garage, so I opened the garage door and turned on the light.

And there was Dad, eating one of Aunt Cakey's brownies.

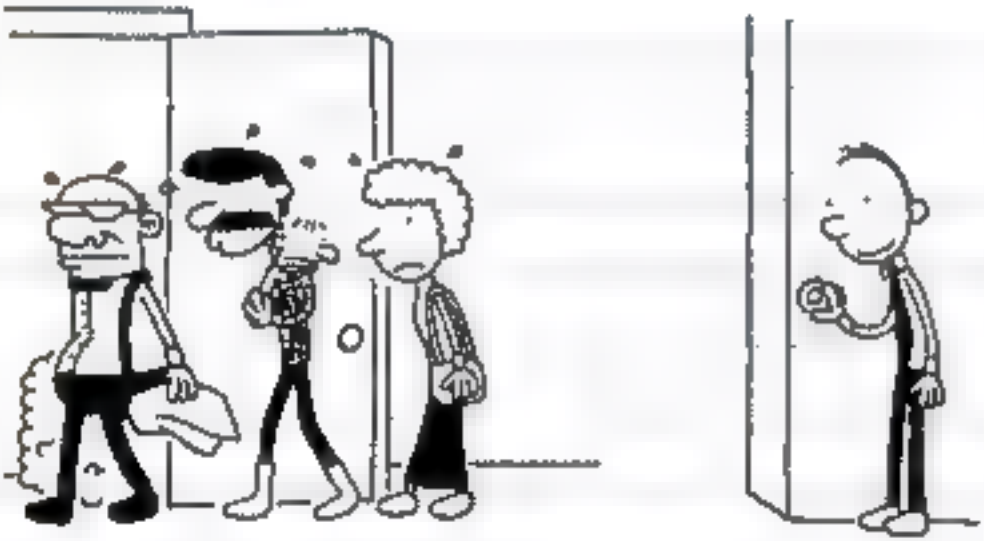
Dad is on a strict no-sweets diet, because his cholesterol is so high. So he was hiding out from Mom. I didn't really know what to do after I put the trash in the trash can, so I just turned the light back off and shut the door.

Thanksgiving kind of dragged on, and nobody was leaving. Eventually, Dad went downstairs to work on his Civil War diorama, which is what he always does when people stay too long.

But Dad forgot to lock the door to his work room, and Uncle Joe walked right in. Uncle Joe seemed pretty interested in Dad's diorama, so Dad took about 20 minutes to tell Uncle Joe all about the 150th Regiment and the role it played at Gettysburg. But I don't think Uncle Joe absorbed a whole lot of Dad's speech.

Thanksgiving really didn't last too much longer after that.

Dad used his trick of last resort, which is to slowly turn up the thermostat until everyone clears out.



I don't think Mom's onto that trick yet, which is a good thing. Because one of these days, I'm sure I'll have a reason to use it myself.

Friday, November 26th

The days after Thanksgiving are always weird at our house, because some random relative stays with us for a couple of days. This year, we got Great Uncle Clyde.

Uncle Clyde is ok, but he really doesn't say a lot. In fact, he just makes these noises, and it's hard to know if they're even supposed to be words!. It makes for some uncomfortable situations.

Sometimes it's hard to tell if he's actually looking for a response, so every once in a while I take a stab at it.

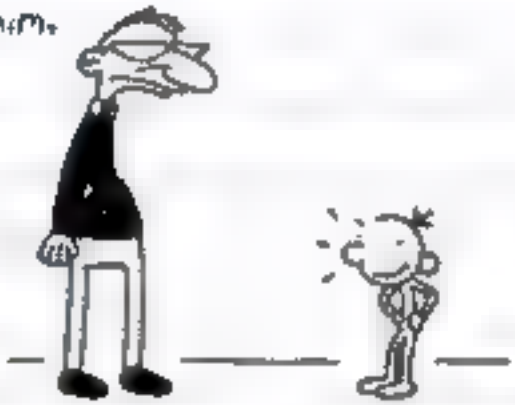
Gramma lucked out this year. The relative who is staying with her is Uncle Freddie, who is one of my favorite relatives.

I want to be just like Uncle Freddie when I get older. He's got a ton of money, a giant screen t.v. with a phone built right into it, and even a remote-control toilet seat that heats up when you press a button from the other room.

I used to not like Uncle Freddie, because he's got a really loud voice and he used to tease me when I was little.

I had this pair of footie pajamas that was blue, and every time Uncle Freddie would see me, he'd say:

When Uncle Freddie called me "Blue," it really upset me for some reason. I told Mom, so one day she took me out to the store and bought me a brand-new pair of pajamas to replace my blue ones. So the next time Uncle Freddie saw me, I was ready for him.

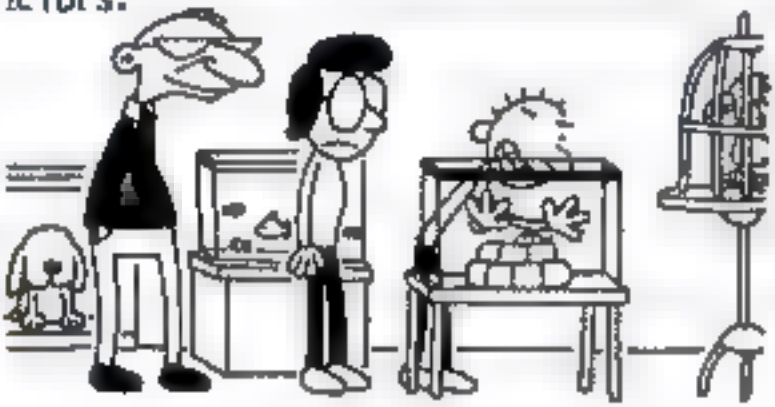


But that only lasted for about five seconds.

Anyway, I eventually got over my dislike for Uncle Freddie. Maybe it was when I outgrew my footie pajamas, or it was when I found out he was loaded with money.

Whenever Uncle Freddie's in town, he always spoils us. This year, he piled all three of us boys into his Cadillac and promised to buy each one of us a pet. Mom wasn't so hot on the idea, so she came along to make sure things didn't get out of hand.

And it's a good thing she came, too, because of course Rodrick had his eye on the tarantulas and boa constrictors.



Me and Manny picked out fish, so Uncle Freddie bought us a big aquarium to hold them.

Manny got a goldfish and I got this really cool Angel fish that's all sorts of different colors.

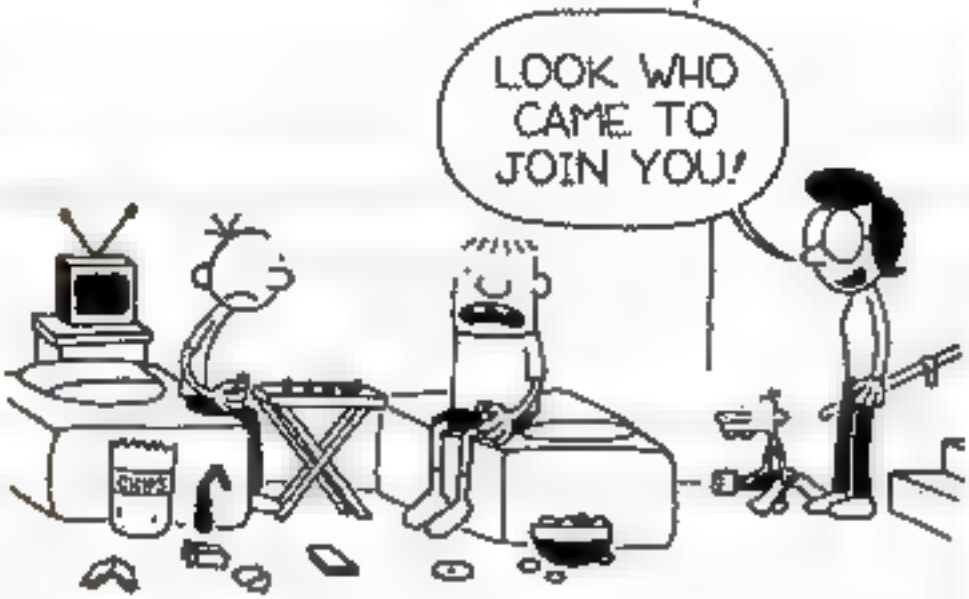
Rodrick ended up getting a fish, too. I don't know what kind it is, but he picked it out because it said "Aggressive" on the tank's label.

So when I went to feed my fish this afternoon, I made sure not to get my hand too close to the water, just in case.

Saturday, November 27th

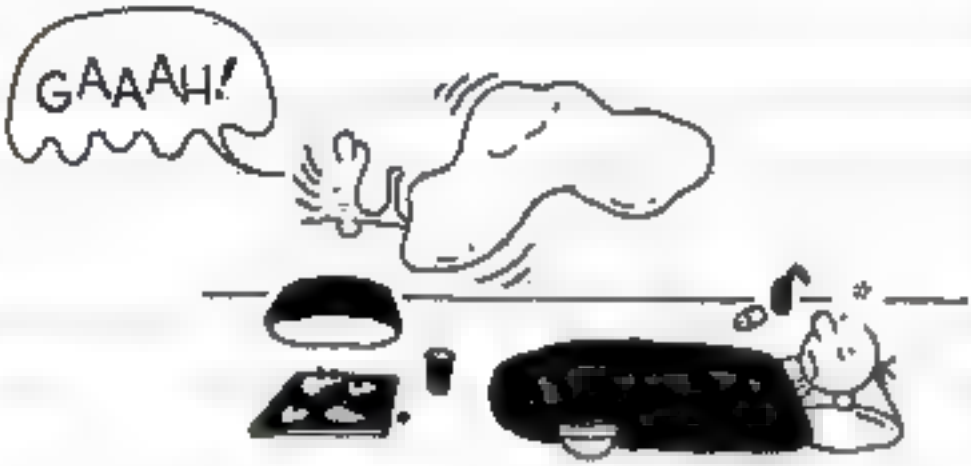
Uncle Clyde finally went home today, so I was allowed to have Rowley spend the night. Rodrick was over at Ward's house, so me and Rowley got the whole basement to ourselves.

We bought tons of junk food and borrowed Rowley's dad's portable t.v. We even managed to sneak a couple of horror movies into the house, so we were all set. But everything changed when Mom showed up at 10:00 with Manny.



Manny had been following us around all night, because for some reason he idolizes Rowley. I'm not sure if Mom was planting Manny as a spy or what, but all I knew was that there was no way we could watch our horror movies with him around.

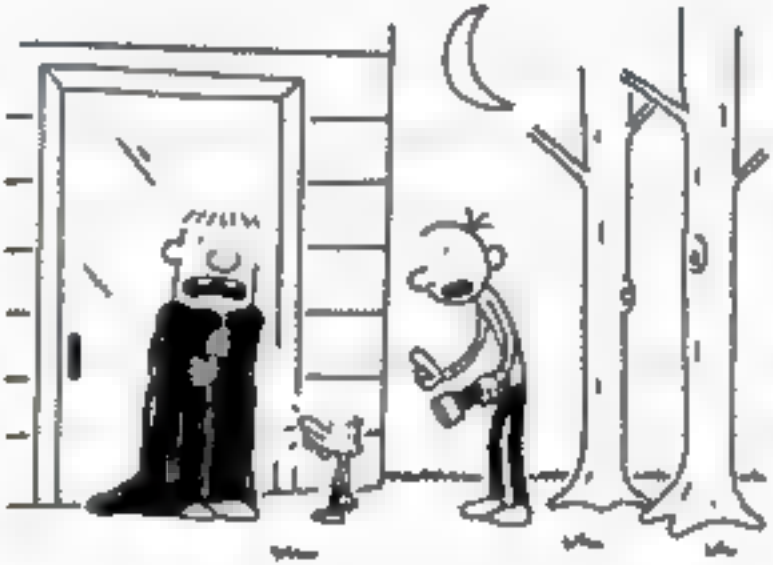
Manny ruined the last sleepover I had. First, he wouldn't leave me and Ben alone. Then, he slept down in the basement with us. But when he got cold in the middle of the night, he crawled into Ben's sleeping bag to keep warm, wearing nothing but a pair of Spiderman Underoos.



Since the horror movies were out the window, we had to come up with something else to do for fun. Manny's flashlight gave me an idea. Once Mom went to bed, the three of us snuck out through the sliding glass door.

I had to make Manny swear that he wouldn't tell on us for sneaking out, and he agreed.

I'm sure he was just trying to impress Rowley, his hero.



I made up a dare for me and Rowley. Each one of us had to go way back into the woods, one at a time, and find the tree fort that we built last summer.

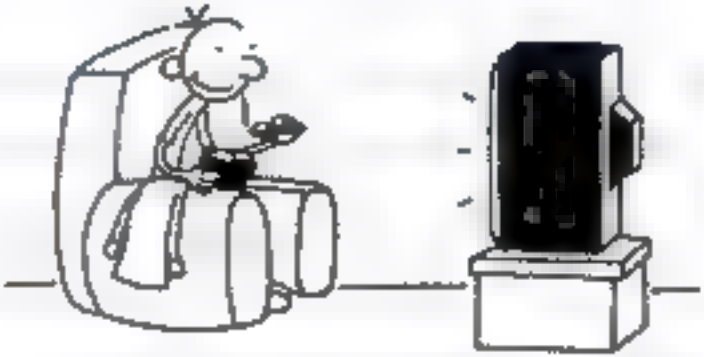
Then, we had to write our name on the bottom step to prove we made it there. And whoever was too chicken to do the whole dare had to call the other guy "Sir" for the rest of their life.

Rowley agreed, but he didn't seem too sure. I said I'd go first, and I headed into the woods.

Of course, I had no intention of actually going to the tree fort. I walked about 30 feet into the woods, then snuck back around to the side of the house and let myself in.

I had already written my name on the bottom step of the tree fort when me and Rowley built it this summer. So I already had that part of the dare covered.

To kill some time, I made myself a big bowl of ice cream and caught up on some t.v.



Once I figured enough time had passed, I walked out the side door and snuck back into the woods. I messed up my hair and rubbed some dirt on my clothes and my coat, then came bursting out of the woods towards Rowley.

I could tell by the look on Rowley's face that there was no way he was going out there. In fact, he didn't even pretend to try.

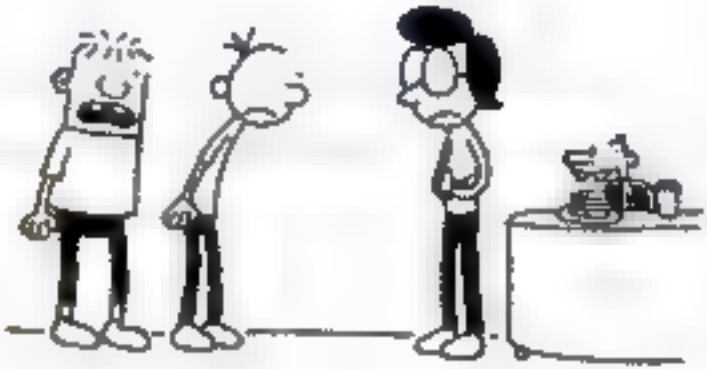
Sunday, November 28th

Me and Rowley stayed up way too late last night. Manny pooped out around midnight, and once we were sure he was asleep, we put one of our horror movies in the portable t.v. I turned the sound off so Manny wouldn't wake up.

Rowley covered his eyes for the whole movie. So with the movie on "mute" and his hands over his eyes, I'm not sure exactly what Rowley got out of it.

Anyway, the only thing that got me out of bed this morning was the smell of breakfast cooking in the kitchen.

I woke Rowley up, and we went upstairs. But as soon as we got into the kitchen, I could tell something was up.



From the smug look on Manny's face and the way Mom was standing, I knew right away that Manny had ratted us out about last night.

And Mom knew everything... she knew we snuck out, she knew about the picture we broke when we got in a Milk Dud fight, and she even somehow knew about the horror movie we watched. I have to admit, Manny was pretty thorough.

But the thing Mom seemed most upset about was how I (supposedly) walked all the way back to the tree fort by myself last night. And she said she had "evidence" because she walked there this morning and saw for herself how I had written my name on it.

I knew I had to make a choice: take the rap for walking to the tree fort, or admit to Rowley that I never did it. This one was a no-brainer. I told Rowley the truth, so Mom backed off. And there was no doubt I made the right choice. Being on Rowley's bad side is way different from being on Mom's bad side.

After breakfast, we all went to church together. Rowley's family doesn't go to church, so he doesn't really know what you're supposed to do during all the different parts of the service.

If he ever comes with us again, I've got to tell him that during the "peace be with you" part, all you need to do is shake people's hands.

SMOOCH

Monday, November 29th

Now that soccer and play practice are over, I get home earlier than the rest of the family. And today, I was especially thankful to get home before Dad.

But the best thing about having no more soccer or play practice is that I can take a nap from the time I get home until Mom calls me downstairs for dinner.

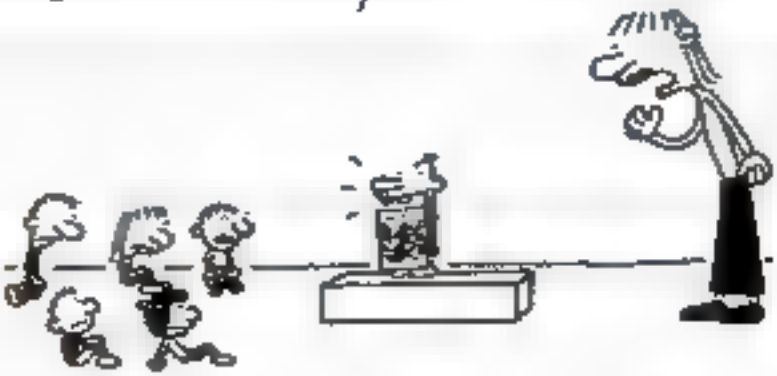
Man, I LIVE for my naps. I've gotten so addicted to them that when I wake up in the morning, my first thought is always, "How long until my nap?"

Actually, my napping privilege is in serious jeopardy right now. Rodrick takes a nap after school, too, and when we come to the dinner table, we're both too groggy and grumpy to talk.

I don't think Dad is too thrilled about coming home to this scene every night. I'll bet he's one step away from doing something drastic like making a "no naps after school" rule, which would totally ruin me.

Rodrick's in hot water with Mom right now. Apparently Rodrick had some hotrod magazine, and on the cover there was a woman draped across the hood of a car, wearing a bikini.

Mom probably never would have known about it if Manny hadn't found the magazine in Rodrick's room and brought it to his daycare for show and tell.



I saw the magazine myself and it honestly wasn't anything to get worked up about. But Mom lumps anything with any kind of skin in the same general category, and she doesn't allow that kind of stuff to be in the house.

So she held another "Summit," but this time it was just her and Rodrick.

She wrote down a bunch of questions for Rodrick to answer. After the Summit, I got a hold of the notebook and read what they both wrote.

I can't tell if Rodrick was really sorry for what he had done or if he was just looking for the quickest way out of an uncomfortable situation.

Did owning this magazine make you a better person?

No.

Did it make you more popular at school?

No.

How do you feel about having owned this type of magazine now?

I feel ashamed

Do you have anything you want to say to women for having owned this offensive magazine?

I'm sorry women.

Tuesday, November 30th

In the past couple of days, the Invisible Chrag thing has completely gotten out of hand. I think the whole seventh grade must be in on the joke by now, and a bunch of teachers have found out what's going on. I knew it was just a matter of time before the bottom fell out.

So when I heard my name on the loudspeaker during Pre-Algebra, I knew my goose was cooked.

On my way down to Vice Principal Roy's office, I tried to figure out a way to squirm out of the trouble I knew I was in. I thought maybe I could spin the facts and somehow make Chirag look like the bad guy in this whole thing.

I figured Mr. Roy was going to make me apologize to Chirag, which would be humiliating enough, and then there would be some type of official punishment after that.

When I got to Mr. Roy's office, he launched into a speech about respect and decency and all of that. As for the facts of the case, he seemed to know just about everything that had happened so far, including exactly when the joke started and how I was the ringleader of the whole operation.

So I didn't have a whole lot of wiggle room there. But luckily, Mr. Roy got one crucial fact wrong, which was the name of the victim. So that made the apology part a whole lot easier.

Mr. Roy seemed pretty satisfied with my apology, and he actually let me go without tacking on any detention. I just tried to hustle out of there before Sharif could pipe up.

I had always heard that after Mr. Roy chews out a kid in his office, he sends them away with a pat on the back and a lollipop. And now I can tell you firsthand that it's true.

I ran right into Chirag in the hallway, who must have heard my name on the loudspeaker and came down to gloat.

But of course I just walked right past him like he wasn't even there.

Unfortunately for me, the story doesn't end there. After school, I went up to Rowley's to tell him all about what happened in Mr. Roy's office.

But when I opened the door, who should be there but Chirag.

The pile of Twinkie wrappers and the guilty look on Rowley's face told me Chirag had finally broken Rowley down.

I tried to think of a last-ditch way to keep the joke going, but the stack of video games on the kitchen table distracted me. Chirag had brought over Twisted Wizard 2, which just came out TODAY. So apparently, he had done his homework on what my weakness was, too.

I decided to end the joke right then and there. It has gone on too long and to be honest, it's been more stress than it's worth. Chirag is actually a pretty good guy, and he was so relieved to finally have someone talking to him again that he forgave me for the whole incident.

So I guess I forgive him, too.

Wednesday, December 1st

Today Ms. Jordan, our English teacher, was really steamed because the big dictionary that usually sits on her desk was missing. I guess some kid must have borrowed it without putting it back, but the word she kept using was "stole."

Now I don't know any kids who would steal a dictionary, especially when Ms. Jordan keeps a ton of candy in her top drawer, which no one has ever stolen. But she said that if the dictionary wasn't returned to her before the end of class, she would keep us inside for recess, which was next period.

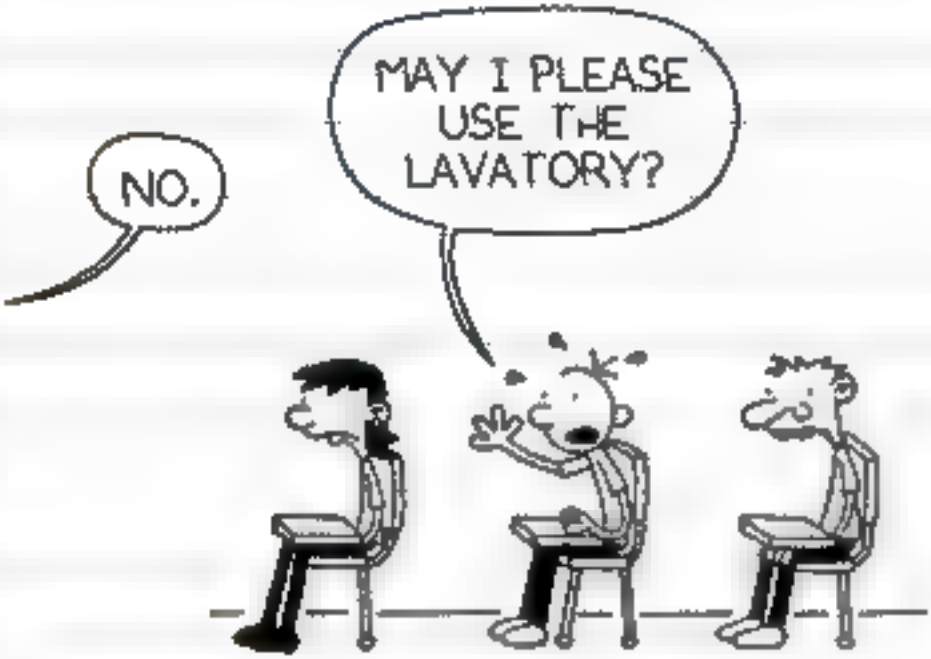
Class ended, and nobody had come forward. So Ms. Jordan made good on her promise and kept us inside for recess. And she said she would keep us inside for recess every day until the dictionary was returned.

She told us that she was going to leave the room, and that if the "culprit" returned the dictionary to her desk while she was gone, there would not be any consequences.

Then she put Patty Farrell in charge as the classroom monitor and left the room.

Patty Farrell was born to be a class monitor. You have never seen a class better behaved than it was with Patty staring everyone down.

All I can say is, I hope this Dictionary Thief hurries up and comes clean. Because if they don't, I'm going to have to seriously cut down on the amount of chocolate milk I drink at lunch.



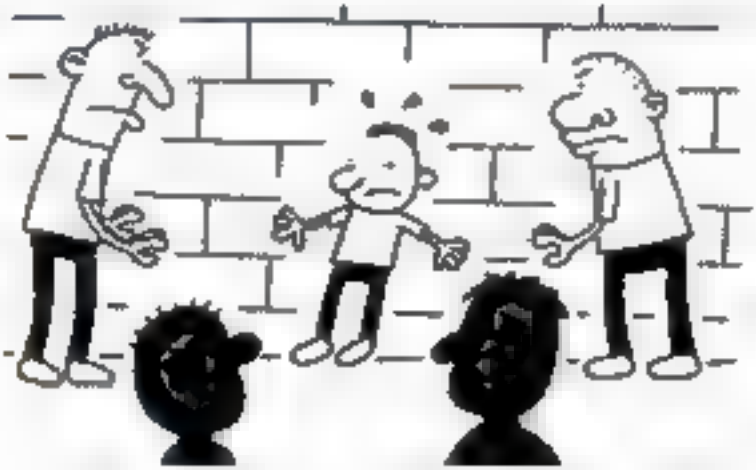
Thursday, December 2nd

Today was day two of Ms. Jordan keeping us inside for recess. She assigned Alex Aruda as class monitor, so I guess her strategy is to pick the best-behaved kids in the class for that duty.

But compared to Patty Farrell, Alex has zero authority. So of course as soon as Ms. Jordan left the room, it was total pandemonium.

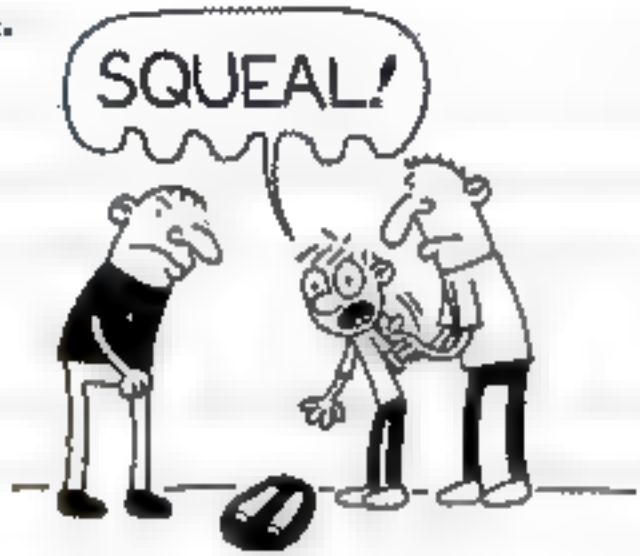
A couple of kids who are pretty sick of getting stuck indoors went to work trying to figure out who took Ms. Jordan's dictionary.

They cornered Scotty Lamb and interrogated him on the suspicion that he might know where the dictionary is, because he's always using big words.



Scotty fessed up to being the Dictionary Thief in less than 15 seconds. But a search through his stuff came up empty, and it was pretty obvious Scotty just confessed because of the pressure he was under.

You would think the goons who interrogated Scotty might have learned a lesson from getting a false confession, but a few minutes later they had Peter Knouff claiming to be the Dictionary Thief, too.



It seems like these guys' idea is to target the smallest kids first, and work their way up. So I figure at the rate they're going, I have about a day and a half left before they get to me. I don't know what dictionaries cost these days, but I'm seriously thinking about just buying one myself and "confessing" before my number is up.

Friday, December 3rd

Today was the third day Ms. Jordan kept the class inside for recess. The thugs who were trying to flush out the Dictionary Thief were moving really quickly, so me and a couple of my friends realized it was just a matter of time before they got to us. We knew we had to take drastic measures.

I came up with the idea to hire Alex Aruda to solve the case. I have read enough Encyclopedia Brown stories to know that sometimes it takes a nerd to get you out of a real pinch. So we approached Alex, who of course had his nose buried in a book.

We told Alex we wanted to hire him to solve the case of the Dictionary Thief, and that there was no time to lose.

Alex had no idea what we were talking about. I guess he's been so wrapped up in his book for the past couple of days that he hasn't taken any notice of what's been going on around him in the classroom. Plus, Alex always stays inside to read during recess anyway, so I guess Ms. Jordan's punishment hasn't really made any kind of change in his life.

We laid out all the facts of the case, which didn't amount to much. Alex thought about it for a while, then agreed to take the case. But unfortunately, Alex has read his share of Encyclopedia Brown, too, and he said there would be a fee.

Alex wanted 10 bucks up front, and another 10 if he could solve the case before the end of the period. Twenty bucks! Encyclopedia Brown only charges 25 cents.

Me and the other guys had a pretty hot debate over whether or not it was worth it.

What finally convinced us all to pony up the cash was when we heard Stanley Lichtman screaming for mercy over by the coat closet.

So we collected 10 bucks and handed it over to Alex.

The first thing Alex did was ask us all for our names, which was pretty insulting, considering the fact that we've all been in the same class for the past six years. But I was willing to look past it.

Then Alex just went back to reading his book. I thought he would at least go around the room and start interviewing people, but he didn't budge.

Finally, right before the period ended, he called us back over to his desk and said he had solved the case. I expected him to break into some kind of scientific mumbo-jumbo like Encyclopedia Brown.

But instead, he just reached into his backpack and pulled out Ms. Jordan's dictionary.

He explained that he borrowed the dictionary from Ms. Jordan a few days ago so he could look up words that he didn't know. So Alex was the Dictionary Thief all along.

Then Alex demanded the rest of his money. Some of the other guys were grumbling as they handed over the cash, but I had to kind of admire him. You don't get the title of Smartest Kid in the Class for nothing.

Next was the matter of putting the dictionary back on Ms. Jordan's desk.

Alex wasn't dumb enough to do it himself, so we had to pick someone else for the job.

We eventually settled on Scotty Lamb, because at one point he had been the Prime Suspect. Scotty wasn't too hot on the idea, but after some threatening looks from the guys who harrassed him to begin with, he agreed to do it.

Unfortunately for Scotty, Ms. Jordan walked back into the classroom at the worst possible moment.

Ms. Jordan forgot all about her "no consequences" promise, and she hit Scotty with a one-week recess suspension.

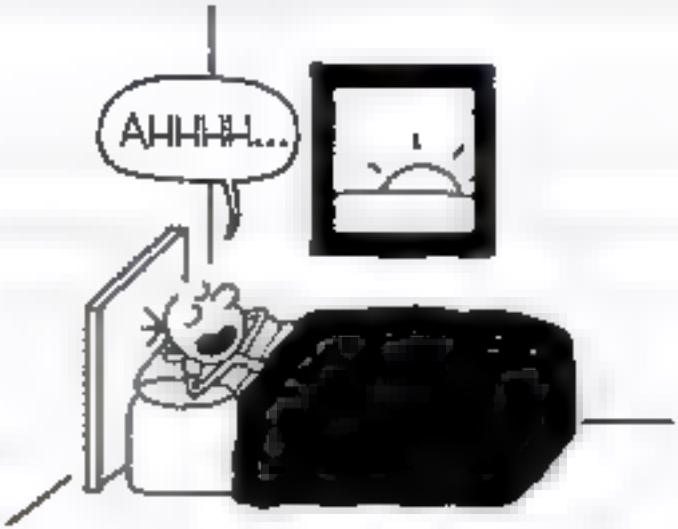
I guess if there's a sunny side to this whole situation, it's that Scotty will have Alex Aruda to keep him company.

Saturday, December 4th

Have you ever had one of those Saturdays where you woke up in the morning and thought it was a school day, but then you realized it wasn't?

And that you didn't have anything you needed to do, so you could just lay in bed all day if you wanted to?

Well, that's how my day started out.

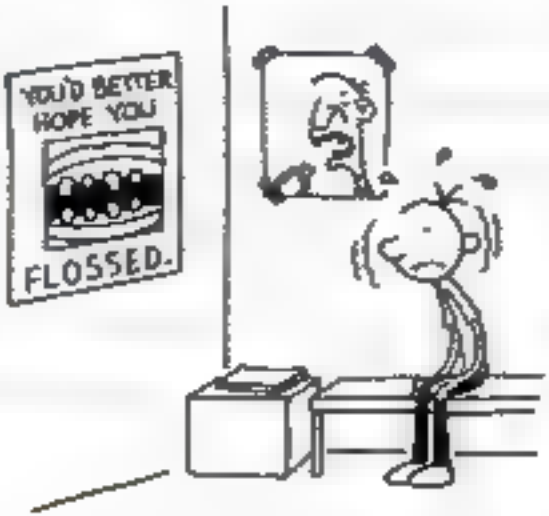


It didn't stay like that, though.

Dad schedules a dentist's appointment for me every six months, and my dentist, Dr. Alcazar, is the WORST. I've been trying to get Mom to let me go to Gentle Dental, like Manny, but Mom says if I switched dentists it might hurt Dr. Alcazar's "feelings." If Mom thinks Dr. Alcazar has "feelings" then it just proves she doesn't know the first thing about him.

The main reason I want to switch to Gentle Dental is because they have a sign on their window that says, "We Cater to Cowards," and that's me, right there. They have all these posters of teddy bears and stuff like that in their waiting room, but it's not like that in Dr. Alcazar's office.

In Dr. Alcazar's waiting room, there are all these awful pictures of people who didn't take care of their teeth. I guess the idea is to scare you into having good dental hygiene.



When Dr. Alcazar brought me back to his room, he started grilling me about my eating habits. He got all over my case when I told him I drink soda. He brought out this jar that had some teeth in it that were all eaten away, and he told me that this is what happened to the teeth when the jar was filled with soda.

I tried to get a laugh out of Dr. Alcazar by saying, "O.K., I'll try to remember not to ever leave my teeth in a jar of soda."

I don't know if Dr. Alcazar doesn't get kid humor or if he just didn't think it was funny, but he definitely did not laugh. In fact, when he started cleaning my teeth, he seemed to be a lot rougher than I remembered him being before.

I started to kind of panic, because if there's one person you don't want to be mad at you, it's the guy whose got metal tools and is poking around in your mouth.

At one point, Dr. Alcazar started doing x-rays, and he put a wad of cotton between my teeth, and then told me to bite down. I started to get the hang of it, and so when he was doing my back molars, I did the "bite down" part before he told me to do it to show him that I was paying attention.

Unfortunately what I thought was the cotton wad was actually Dr. Alcazar's finger.

He sent me back out to the waiting room and told me he would deliver my "diagnosis" in a few minutes.

I figured Dr. Alcazar would want to get revenge on me for biting him, so he'd say I needed ten cavities filled or a root canal or something like that.

But what he did was worse. Dr. Alcazar handed Dad a pamphlet and sent me down the hallway to Dr. Platt, who is an orthodontist.

Two hours later, I was back in the car with a contraption that looked like a medieval torture device strapped to my head.

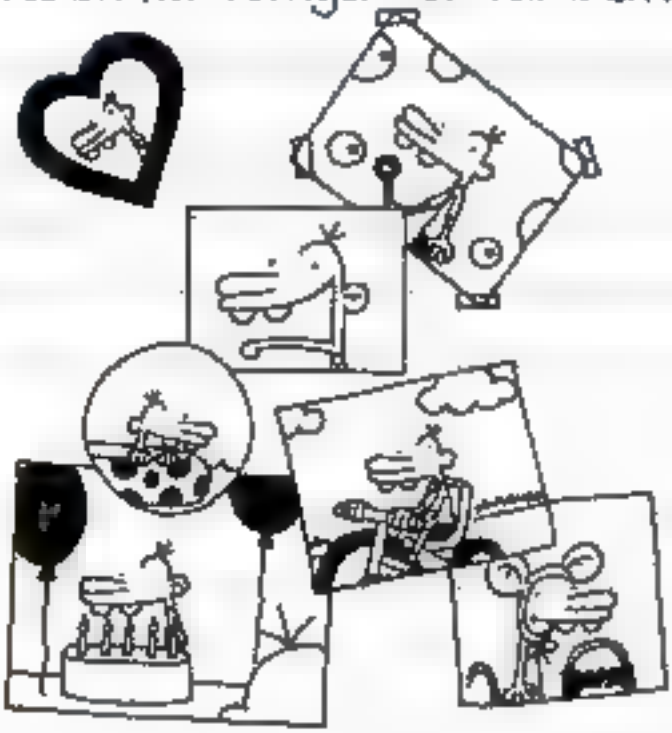
Dr. Platt told me I had to wear the headgear at all times, even in school. So I guess Dr. Alcazar's plan was to try to end my social life.

I took that thing off the second I got home. Mom told me I had to wear it, or my teeth would end up like Rodrick's, who stopped wearing his retainer too soon. What Mom doesn't know is that I'm actually to blame for that. One time, Rodrick caught me trying out his retainer, and after that, he could never bring himself to put it back on.

Sunday, December 5th

Today Mom and Dad had some errands to run, so they dropped me off at Gramma's. Manny was already there because he spent the night.

I think Gramma was a little disappointed I showed up, because she was looking forward to spending the day with Manny alone. Gramma pretends she doesn't have a favorite grandkid, but the pictures on her refrigerator tell a different story.



There's only one picture of me on there, but you can only see the back of my head.

I guess I should consider myself lucky, though, because Rodrick's picture isn't on there at all.

But if anyone ever mentions the number of pictures of Manny on the refrigerator, Gramma always says the same thing.

Hey, everyone's got their favorites, so I'm not complaining. All I'm saying is that I think it would be a whole lot easier on Gramma if she would just be open and about who her favorite is, like Dad's father, Grampa.

Actually, I used to be Gramma's favorite a long time ago, but I ruined it for myself. One time, I was over at Gramma's house, and the ice cream truck went by. Gramma wouldn't give me any money, because I had already had ice cream that day.

So I sat down at the kitchen table and wrote Gramma a note.

I hate
you Gram.
mq

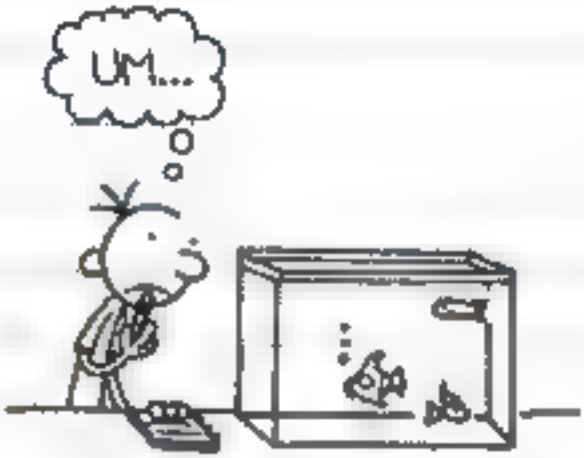
Gramma kept that note and framed it. She has it hanging in her foyer to this day. And whenever she's showing someone around her house, she points it out to them.

I honestly don't think she's ever going to let me live that one down.

Monday, December 6th

I haven't mentioned my fish for a while, but there's a reason for that. When I first brought him home, I was really excited. I thought it would be cool to keep a separate journal for my fish and record everything he did every day.

But to be honest with you, I learned that fish don't do a whole lot that's worth writing down.

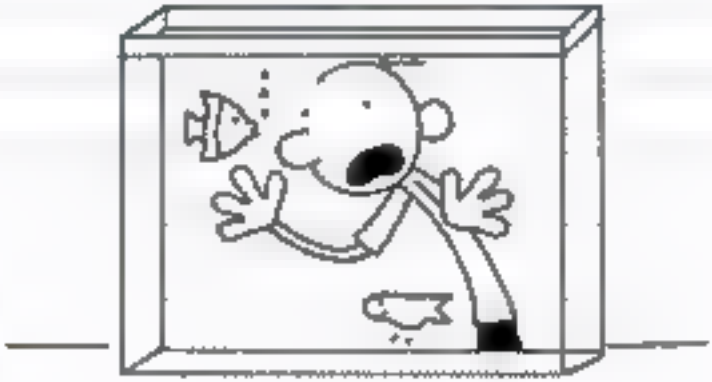


So I kind of lost interest after a few days.

But I should have kept better track of what was going on in the tank. Because when I went to feed my fish today, I was in for a pretty big shock.

First of all, Manny's fish was gone. It was pretty obvious that Rodrick's fish ate it.

Second of all, even though my fish was still there, his eyes were missing. Rodrick's stupid fish must have attacked mine after he ate Manny's.



And when I tried to feed my fish, he couldn't find the food, even though I was tapping on the glass to show him where it was.

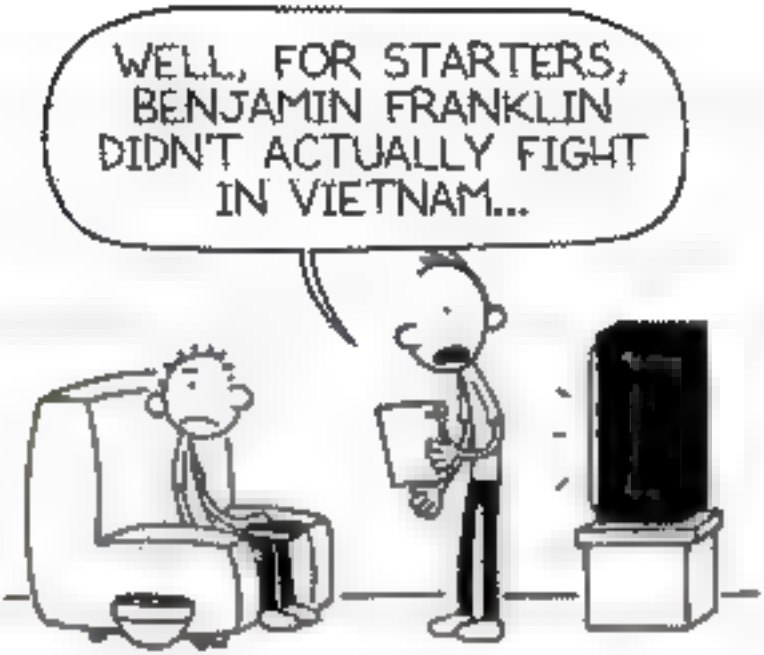
I decided to move the aquarium over to the kitchen table. Dad complained and said he couldn't eat with my fish looking like that, but I needed to keep an eye on Rodrick's fish and make sure he didn't try anything funny.

Tuesday, December 7th

Rodrick has a history paper due tomorrow, and Mom's actually making him type it himself for once.

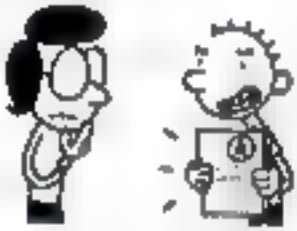
Rodrick usually writes his papers out on notebook paper and then hands them off to Dad to type. And then when Dad's reading over Rodrick's work, Dad finds all sorts of factual errors.

Then, Dad goes back to Rodrick and tells him all the mistakes he found.



But Rodrick doesn't care about the errors, and he tells Dad to just go ahead and type it up anyway.

Only Dad can't stand to type something with all those mistakes in it, so he just writes the whole thing from scratch. And a few days later, Rodrick brings home his graded paper and puts it up on the refrigerator door.

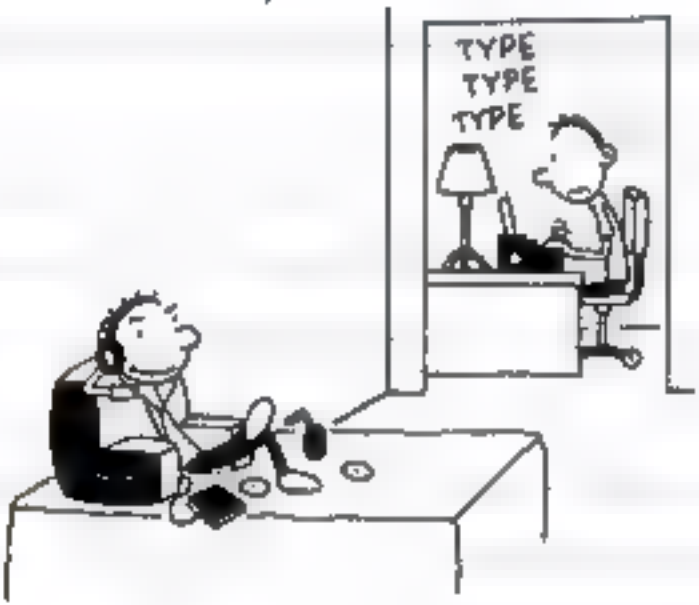


Well, this has been going on for years, and I guess tonight Mom finally decided it was time for Rodrick to start doing his own work.

So she had Dad give Rodrick a crash course in typing and then let him go to it.

I could hear Rodrick typing about one letter a minute, and you could tell it was driving Dad crazy. Plus, Rodrick would come out of the study every few minutes and ask Dad some dumb question.

Eventually, Dad cracked. He waited for Mom to go to bed, and then typed Rodrick's whole paper for him.



I have to say, I'm pretty impressed with Rodrick's system. Sometimes I wish Dad didn't know I know how to type, because now I can't use the same trick when I get to high school.

Wednesday, December 8th

I don't know if I have mentioned it recently but it has been FREEZING every morning when I wake up.

Dad has been having a hard time getting me out of bed so he's started to play hardball.

He wakes me up ten minutes before Mom's out of the shower so I haul all my blankets into her bedroom and wait until she's done.

I lay down on top of the heating vent and just wait there until Mom gets out of the shower. Sometimes it's almost as good as still being in bed.

The only downside is that the heater turns itself off every two minutes and then I'm just laying there on a cold piece of metal waiting for it to turn back on.

But recently I have found a secret weapon in battling the freezing mornings. I found an old pink bathrobe and a pair of slippers in Mom's closet, and I've been putting them on every time I get out of bed. It makes the morning a whole lot more bearable and puts me in a whole different frame of mind to start my day.

I'll tell you, women have the right idea with this robe thing. I only wonder what else I'm missing out on.

But unfortunately, I think my robe and slippers days are officially over.

Dad walked in on me waiting for Mom to get out of the shower today, and he didn't seem too happy.

When I got home from school this afternoon, there was a big box in the foyer filled with stuff for Goodwill. And I'm pretty sure I saw a pink bathrobe sticking out of the top.

Thursday, December 9th

Tonight at dinner, Mom got a phone call. It was Rowley's mom saying that last week, Mrs. Smedley gave birth to a baby boy.

Dad practically choked on his hamburger, and I knew the reason why.

First of all, I don't think Dad even knew Mrs. Smedley was pregnant. And second, that means there are six months until the next Smedley half-birthday party, which means Dad only has less than 180 days until he has to face his doom.

To understand what I'm talking about, you'd have to know the Smedleys. Every time one of their kids gets to be six months old, the Smedleys have a half-birthday party and invite all the neighbors.

The highlight of the party is when they make all of the adults line up one by one and try to get their baby to laugh. So the grown-ups end up making complete fools of themselves by doing all these wacky things, and it's all being videotaped by Mr. Smedley.

And everybody knows that Mr. Smedley's big dream is to win the grand prize on America's Funniest Home Videos, so he's just trying to get some good material to send to the t.v. station.

He's gotten some pretty decent stuff. Last year, Mr. Jordan split his pants while doing jumping jacks in front of Seth Smedley, and the year before that, Mr. Lee actually fell into Shane Smedley's baby pool after doing a cartwheel for him.

But Mr. Smedley still hasn't gotten a call back from America's Funniest Home Videos, so I guess he'll keep having these half-birthday parties until he does.

I don't even think Dad knows about the America's Funniest Home Videos angle, and it probably wouldn't even matter if he did. Dad hates to get up in front of people and perform, so I think having to act like a monkey for somebody's kid is his worst nightmare.

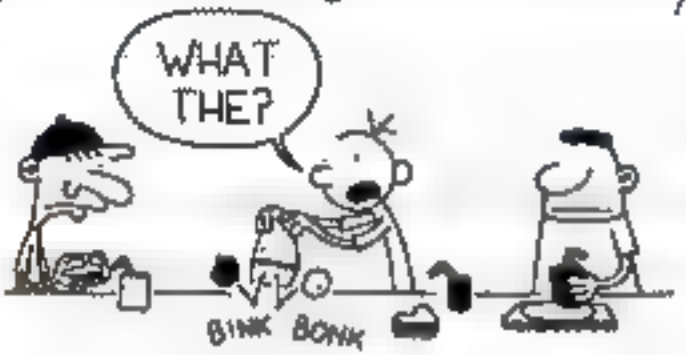
But so far, Dad has avoided having to do it. Every time it's his turn to get up and try to make a Smedley kid laugh, he's conveniently in the bathroom or he can't be found at all. Mom's on to him, though. She said that this year, he's going to have to be a good sport and take his turn just like everybody else.

I really wish Mom would have timed her ultimatum a little better.

I was counting on Dad taking me and Rowley out for ice cream tonight, but after dinner, Dad took a long look at the calendar, and then he went straight to bed.

Friday, December 10th

You know how you can tell that Mom ran out of good snacks like Twinkies and Ho Hos when she was making your lunch? You get two fruits in your bag.



When I got home, I complained to Mom about not getting a snack. But she said that one of us boys must be stealing the snacks from the box on top of the spare freezer in the laundry room, because she buys just enough to cover our lunches for a week.

Then she said she's not going to buy extra snacks if we run out anymore, and if we come up short at the end of the week, we'll just have to "make do."

This is a really serious problem. If I don't get a snack in my lunch every day, I might actually starve to death. I usually eat about two bites of my sandwich and give my fruit to Rowley. So most of my nutrition is coming from Ring Dings and Snowballs.

After Mom walked out, I confronted Rodrick and Manny about stealing the snacks, but of course they both denied it. At this point, I'm betting it's Manny. The spare freezer is really tall, but that kid can climb like a monkey.

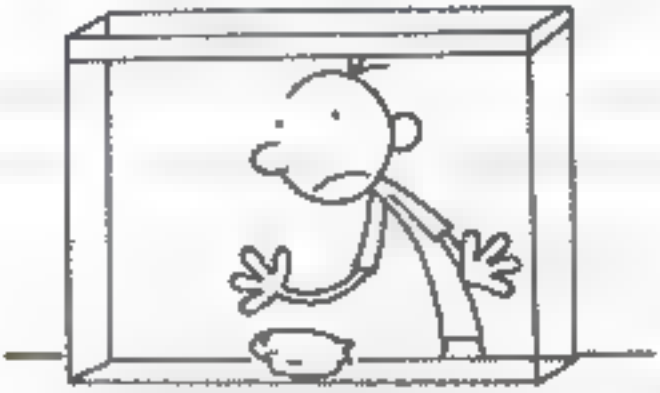
I'm sure everyone thinks I'm the one who's doing it, but trust me, I'm not. I admit that back at the beginning of the school year I used to steal snacks from the laundry room, but I learned my lesson when we ran out of snacks on a day that Dad made our lunches.

Hopefully whoever has been stealing the snacks will stop now that Mom has laid down the law. But I'll keep my eyes peeled just in case.

Saturday, December 11th

We had Grampa's birthday party over at our house tonight. When Mom was setting up this afternoon, she moved the aquarium from the kitchen table into the garage. And sure enough, a couple hours later when I checked up on my fish, he was gone.

It was no big mystery who was responsible.



So Rodrick's fish finally ate mine. Now Rodrick's fish is too fat to move, and he just sits there at the bottom of the tank like a slug. But I guess he should have thought of that before he decided to go and get greedy.

At dinner, Dad could see I was pretty bummed out. He tried to make me feel better by talking about it.

But he said he didn't really know what to say, because he had never had a pet die. He told me the story of how his cat, Nutty, ran away to a butterfly farm when he was a little boy.

He told me it made him really sad when it happened, but that he felt o.k. about it whenever he thought of Nutty frolicking with all of those butterflies.

Now, I have no idea what that has to do with my fish getting eaten. But I know how much Dad loved his cat Nutty, and so I listened to his Butterfly Farm story for what must have been the thousandth time.

But then Grampa spoke up. He said that Nutty didn't actually run away to a Butterfly Farm all those years ago, and that he just made that story up to tell Dad.

He said that what really happened was that one cold night, he accidentally left Nutty outside, and Nutty froze like a popsicle.

Grampa said that now that Dad is a grown man, maybe they could have a good laugh over it.

But Dad did not laugh about it. In fact, he didn't say anything at all. He sent Grampa home before we even had a chance to eat any of his ice cream cake. And I don't think it was a mistake that he sent Grampa outside without his coat.

After that, Dad went straight to his room. So that's the second time in three nights that Dad has gone to bed before 7:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 12th

Today we got our first sure sign that Christmas is coming... the Sears Catalog came in the mail.

Every year when we get the Sears Catalog, me and Manny fight over who gets the first crack at it. This year Mom gave first dibs to Manny, so all I could do was watch while he circled all the things he wants for Christmas with a big red magic marker.

Manny must have circled every single toy in the catalog. He was even circling really expensive things like a miniature go-cart with a real gas motor and stuff like that, so I decided to step in and give him some good older-brother type advice.

I told him that if he circled things that were too expensive, he was just going to end up with a bunch of clothes on Christmas day. I showed him how it's better to just circle three or four medium-priced gifts so that he ends up getting a couple things he really wants.

But of course he just ignored me and went back to circling everything on every page. I guess from Manny's point of view, everything's coming from Santa anyway, so he didn't have much use for my advice. Looks like he'll have to learn the hard way.

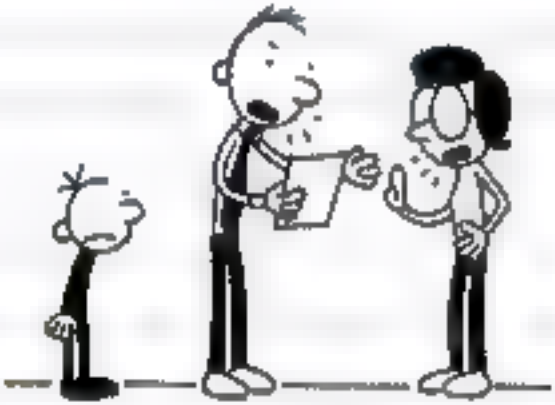
Rodrick doesn't fight with me over the Sears Catalog anymore because he just makes his own wish list and keeps it up on the refrigerator year-round.

Rodrick's Wish List

1. New drums
2. New van
3. Shrunken head (real)

When I was seven, I put my own wish list on the refrigerator, and it was a disaster. The only thing I really wanted that year was the Barbie Dream House. And NOT because I like girls' toys, like Rodrick said, but because I thought it would be a really awesome hideout for all my army soldiers.

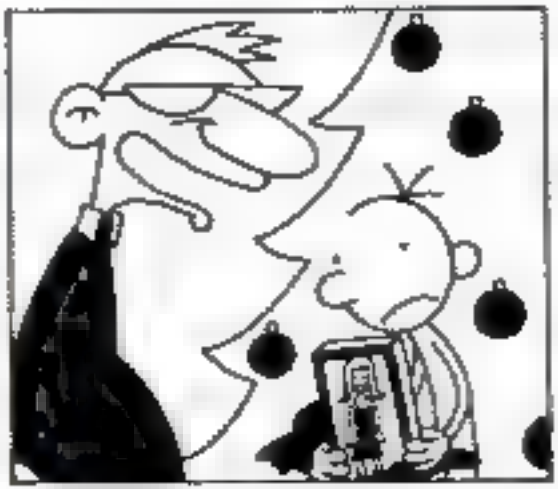
When Mom and Dad saw my wish list on the refrigerator, they got into a big argument over it.



Dad said there was no way he was buying me a "dollhouse," but Mom said it was important for me to "experiment" with whatever kinds of toys I wanted.

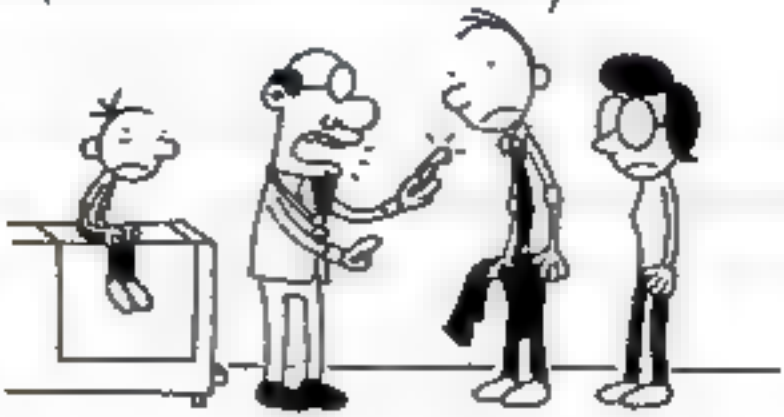
Believe it or not, Dad actually vetoed Mom on this one. Dad told me to start my wish list over and pick out some toys that were more "appropriate."

I had a backup plan. I knew if I told Uncle Freddie what I wanted, he would get it for me. But on Christmas, when I opened Uncle Freddie's gift, it was not what I was expecting. He must have walked into the store and bought the first thing he saw that had the word "Barbie" on it. So if you ever see a picture of me holding a Beach Party Barbie, at least now you know the full story.



Dad was not very happy about Uncle Freddie's gift. Dad told me I should give it away or get rid of it.

I should have just done what Dad said, but I kept it, anyway. And Dad never would have found out if I didn't have an accident a couple months later that sent me to the emergency room. Dad was not too thrilled when the doctor pulled a pink Barbie shoe out of my nose.



And let me tell you, Rodrick has never let me hear the end of THAT.

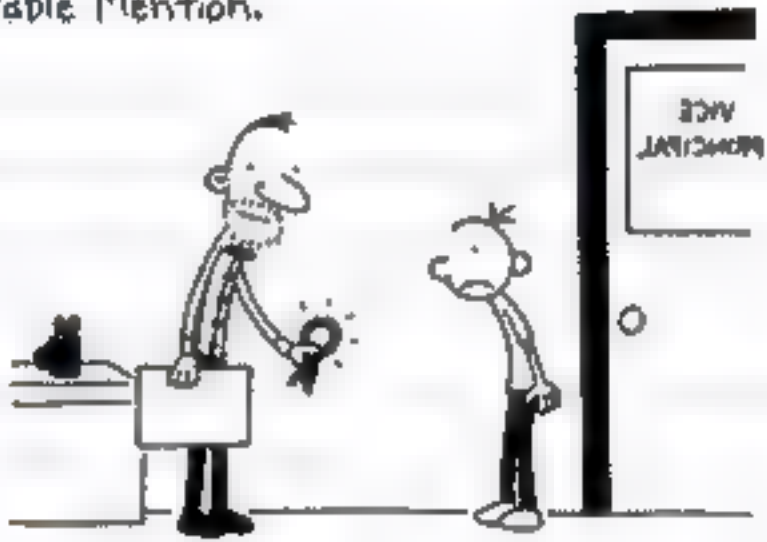
Monday, December 13th

My school day started off with a jolt. In homeroom, my name was announced over the loudspeaker for the second time in two weeks.

Usually, when I get called down to the Vice Principal's office, at least I know what I'm in trouble for. But today I had no clue what was going on, so I didn't even know what kind of mess I was going to have to talk myself out of.

I figured this might have something to do with the giant spitball fight that happened on the bus this morning. I'll admit that I joined in, but I'm not the guy who started it, and I wasn't going to take the heat alone. So by the time I got to Vice Principal Roy's office, I was ready to name names.

It turns out it wasn't about the spitball fight at all. Last week, the school had a contest where everyone had to make anti-smoking posters, and Vice Principal Roy just wanted to tell me I won Honorable Mention.



I have to say, I was pretty relieved I wasn't in any trouble, but now I had a new kind of worry.

All I did for my poster was trace a picture from one of Rodrick's rock albums and then put some words with it. I'm hoping the wrong people don't find out about my plagiarism because I don't need to be sued before I'm even in high school.

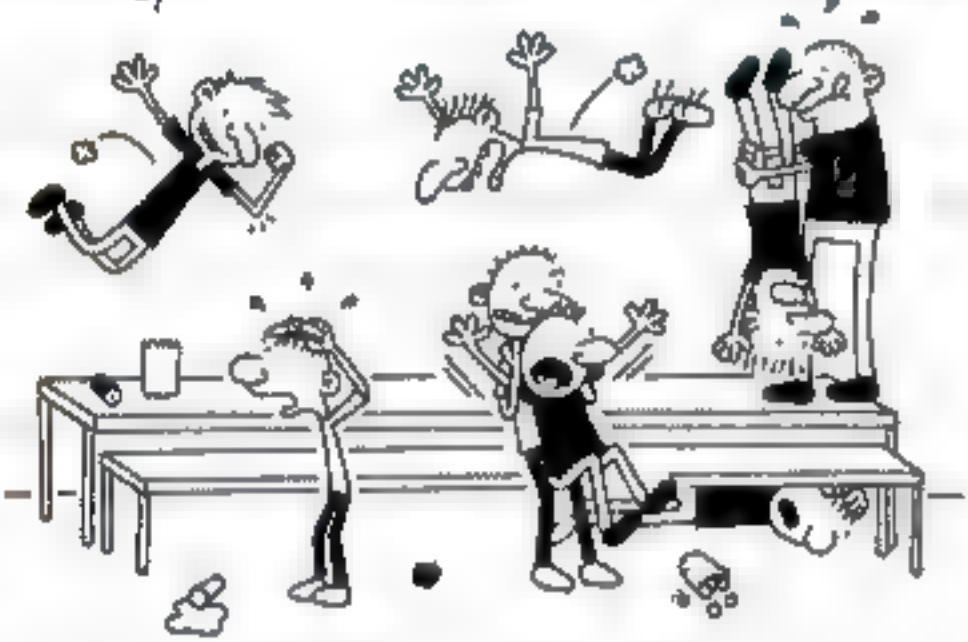
Anyway, the guy I lost to is named Charles Carny and he's in the eighth grade. Charles won a free banana split at Baskin Robbin's for getting first place. I guess Mr. Roy must have been impressed with his rhyming.

If I sound bitter, it's not because I lost. It's just that I always see Charles Carny hanging out by the back door of the school, and he must smoke a pack of cigarettes a day.

Tuesday, December 14th

Today Mr. Underwood, the Phys Ed teacher, made an announcement. He said the girls and the boys will be doing separate units for the rest of the month. The girls will be doing gymnastics, and the boys will be doing wrestling.

Now, if there's one thing the boys in my school are all into, it's professional wrestling, so everyone was wired after the announcement. Lunch comes right after gym, so the cafeteria was a total madhouse.

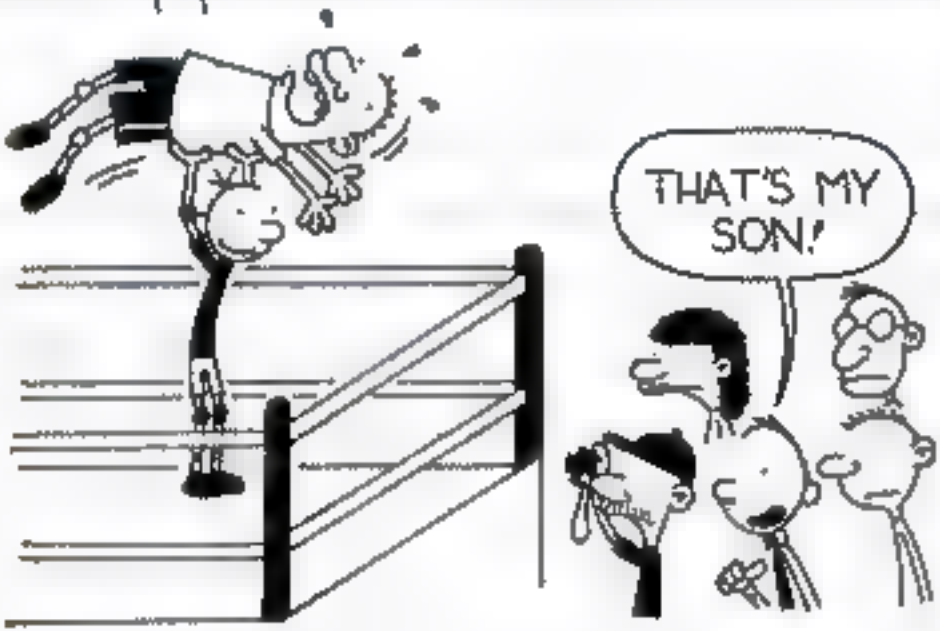


I decided if I didn't want to get clotheslined by one of these fools, I'd better do my homework. So I rented a couple of wrestling video games to learn some moves. Then, I practiced the moves on Rowley.

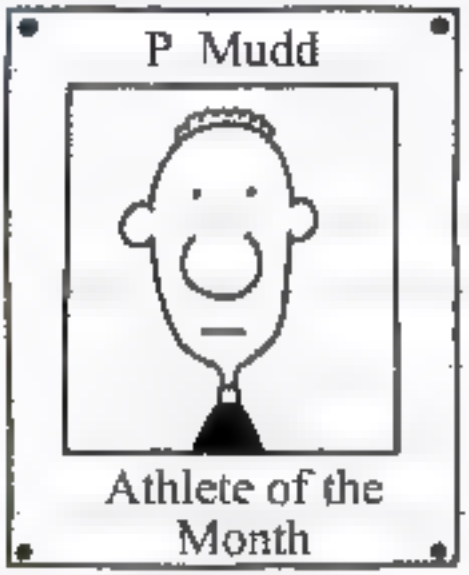
There is this one move called the Camel Clutch where you put your knees in the other guy's back and pull his head backwards. They say if you do it right, the other guy will actually black out.

I was actually starting to get the hang of it. And I would have gotten a whole lot better if Rowley hadn't made up some lame excuse and gone home right when I was in the middle of learning how to do a proper pile driver.

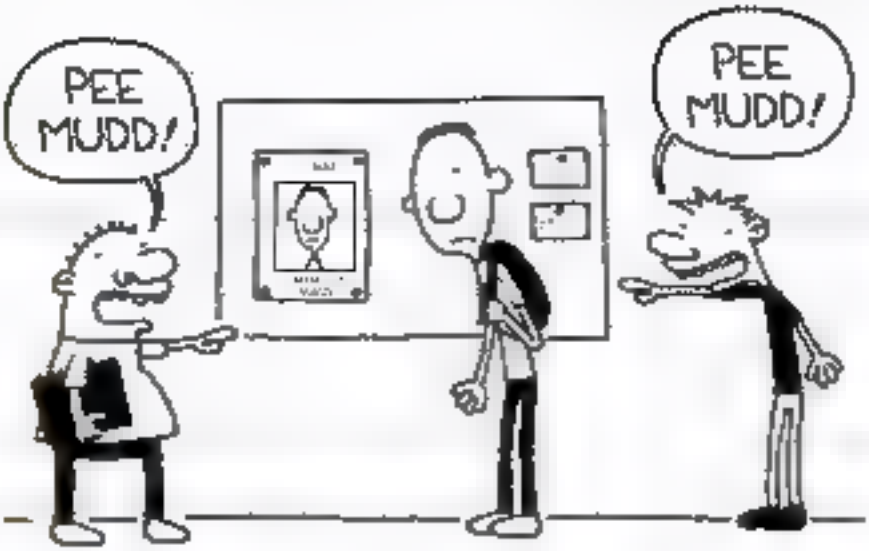
I think I might have found my talent with this wrestling thing. If things go well for me, maybe I'll invite Dad to one of my matches and I can erase any memory he has of that soccer photo in the local paper.



Actually, I'd better make sure I don't do TOO well in gym. Preston Mudd just got named "Athlete of the Month" for being the best player during the basketball unit, and they put his picture up in the hallway.



It took people about five seconds to realize how "P. Mudd" sounded when you said it out loud, and five more seconds after that to start giving Preston a hard time about it.



You'd think that if you won Athlete of the Month, you'd get a little respect, but not at our school. I even saw Dervis Hamilton doing the "Pee Mudd" thing to Preston, and Dervis is something like 4-foot-5.

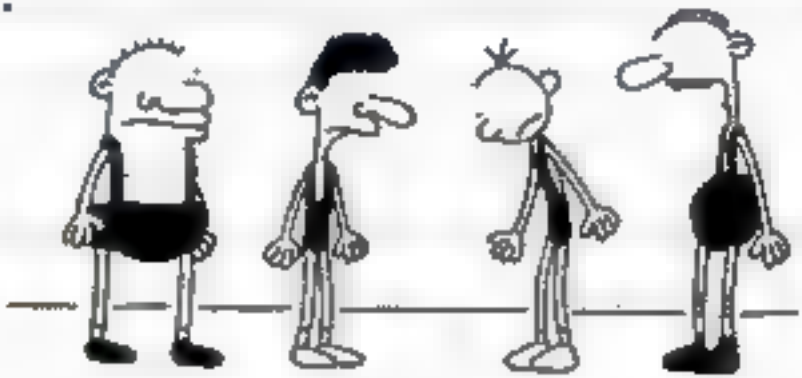
I don't know what people would make out of my name, but I definitely do not want to find out.

Wednesday, December 15th

Well, I found out today that the kind of wrestling Mr. Underwood is teaching in school is COMPLETELY different from the kind of wrestling they have on t.v.

The first thing Mr. Underwood did was hand all of us guys these things he called "singlets," which looked like womens' bathing suits from the 1800's.

Then he told us they were our UNIFORMS, and that we all had to wear them for the whole wrestling unit, which is something like three weeks long.

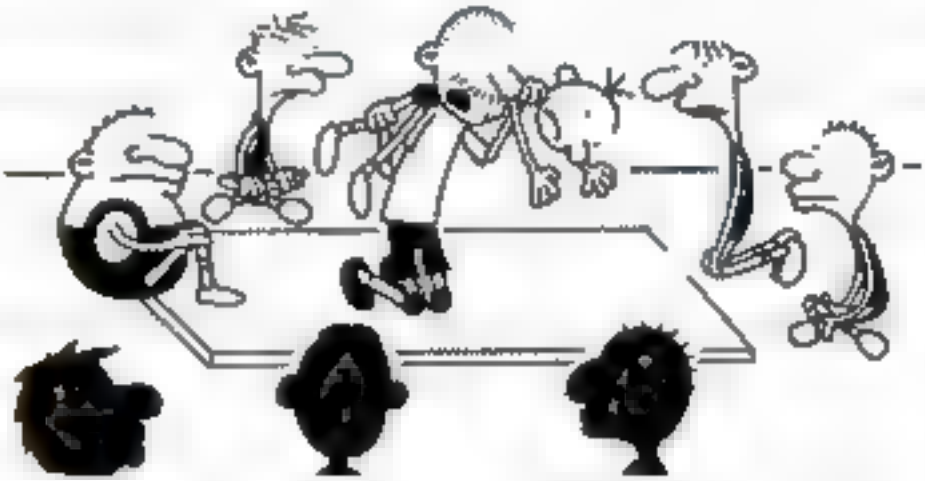


Grownups are always saying that kids these days are out of shape, and after seeing everyone up close in their singlets, I am going to have to agree.

Mr. Underwood started asking for volunteers so he could demonstrate all the different kinds of wrestling holds, but there was no way I was going to raise my hand. Me and Rowley backed all the way up to the curtain that divided the gym, but unfortunately some of the girls who were doing tumbling on the other side caught an eyeful of us in our singlets.

Nobody volunteered to help demonstrate the wrestling moves, so Mr. Underwood started singling people out. And like I said before, his kind of wrestling was NOTHING like the wrestling kids like me are used to. There are no piledrivers, no hitting people with chairs, and no flying off the ropes. In fact there aren't even any ropes at all, just a sweaty mat in the middle of the floor that smells like it has never been washed.

Eventually Mr. Underwood singled me out to show this hold called the Fireman's Carry.



While Mr. Underwood was explaining the hold to everyone I could tell that my uniform was not doing its job keeping me covered. I could feel a breeze down below. I was totally exposed, but there was nothing I could really do about it. All I can say is that I'm super glad the girls were on the other side of the gym behind the curtain.

The day only got worse from there. When I opened up my lunch, there were two boxes of raisins instead of Ho Hos, so the snack thief was at it again. I had to trade my raisins and my sandwich to Marc Cho for a half of a bag of M&M's just to make sure I could get through the rest of the day.

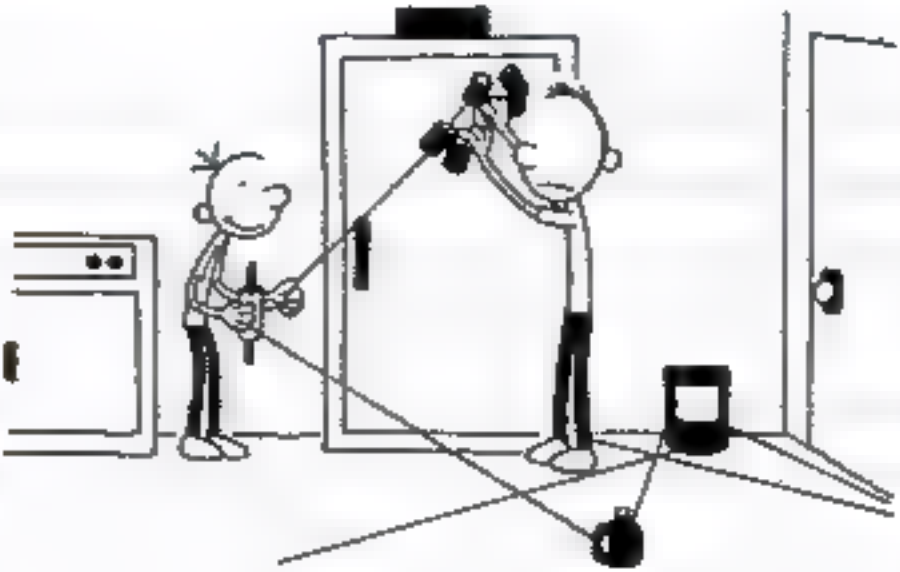
I was really ticked off that someone in my house stole the snacks again. I was especially mad because when I noticed we were running low on snacks yesterday, I borrowed some Ho Hos from Rowley's house to make sure we didn't run out. But whoever was stealing the snacks ate through the regular supply and the backup supply, too.

I was pretty desperate, because here it was only Wednesday, and we were totally out of snacks for the week. I got some more snacks from Rowley's house on the way home from school, but he said his mom is starting to ask questions. So I guess my backup supply of snacks has run dry.

Tonight, I asked Dad if he would help me out with the situation, and he actually sympathized with me.

He took me to the store, and we picked up enough snacks for the next couple of days without Mom knowing.

Dad had some pretty good ideas about protecting the new stash. He helped me set up a booby trap in the laundry room to nab whoever is doing this. We got some fishing line from the basement and rigged it up to some old cans, so that whoever snuck into the laundry room to raid the snacks would make the cans come crashing down.



I was pretty surprised Dad helped me out like he did. I figured he suspected either me or Rodrick of being the thief, because when this problem first cropped up, Dad said the punishment for whoever is caught would be "no drumming and no video games for a month."

I haven't heard any crashing cans tonight, which is very good news for me. Because for tomorrow's lunch, I have a bag of Twizzlers with my name on it.

Thursday, December 16th

Today in gym Mr. Underwood split everyone up into different weight categories for wrestling. There is only one other guy in my weight range and so he is pretty much my permanent sparring partner.

Stinky Williams is a nice kid and all but he's one of those people who really lives up to their nicknames. I don't know if he's got a skin condition or what but Stinky's sweat smells like rotten eggs.

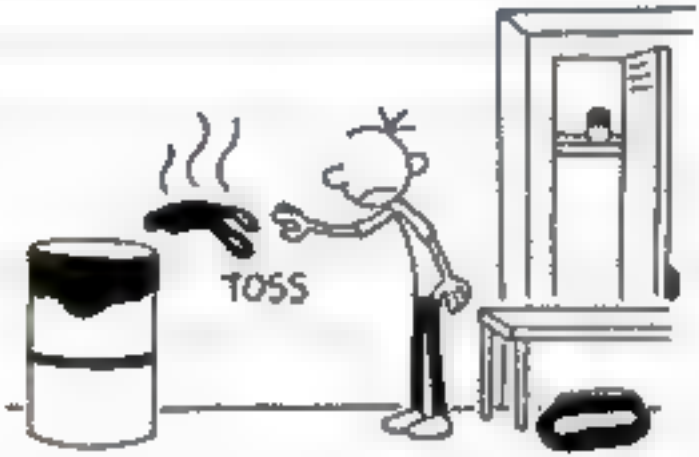
Unfortunately I got to be a lot more familiar with Stinky than I wanted to be. Apparently he has been paying attention in gym class because he pinned me every way you could imagine.

That kid might be cursed with smelly sweat, but he is blessed with superhuman strength. Of course, I might have been able to resist a little better if I was willing to actually touch him with my hands.

All the other kids who would have been in our weight class were smart enough to bail out early.

At least three kids got signed excuses from their parents to get out of the wrestling unit, and Mr. Underwood sent them down the hall to Ms. Watson's Home Ec class. I thought about getting a note, too, but I knew Dad would never go for it. If he did, believe me, I would have been down the hall cooking blueberry pancakes with the rest of those guys instead of letting Stinky roll all over me.

All I can say is, if the school expects me to keep wrestling, they're going to have to buy me a new singlet every day. Because there is no way I'm wearing the same singlet more than once.



After wrestling, we had lunch, and I was looking forward to eating my pack of Twizzlers. But when I reached in my bag, there was nothing there but a sandwich! I didn't even get double fruit, so I had nothing to trade with.

When I got home, I was really ticked off. I went into the laundry room to check the booby trap, and everything was still in place, but all of the snacks were gone! Whoever stole the snacks figured out a way around my trip wires.

I decided it was time to do some heavy duty investigation on the two suspects, and I started with Rodrick. After dinner, Rodrick watched t.v., and I went down into the basement to start going through his stuff.

I didn't uncover anything, but Rodrick started walking down the stairs before I could finish the job. I climbed into his desk to hide out, and I had to wait there while Rodrick had a conversation with this friend, Ward.

I had to sit there and listen to the two of them have a heated debate over whether or not a person could throw up while standing on their head. After about an hour, I realized I might have to spend the night in that desk. But luckily the phone died on Rodrick and when he went upstairs to get the other one, I made a break for it.

Friday, December 17th

This wrestling unit has totally turned our school upside down. Now, kids are wrestling each other in the hallways, in the classrooms, you name it. Recess is the worst. You can't walk five feet on the playground without tripping over a couple of kids going at it. So I just try to keep my distance.

Mark my words, one of these morons is going to roll right into the Cheese and start the Cheese Touch all over again.

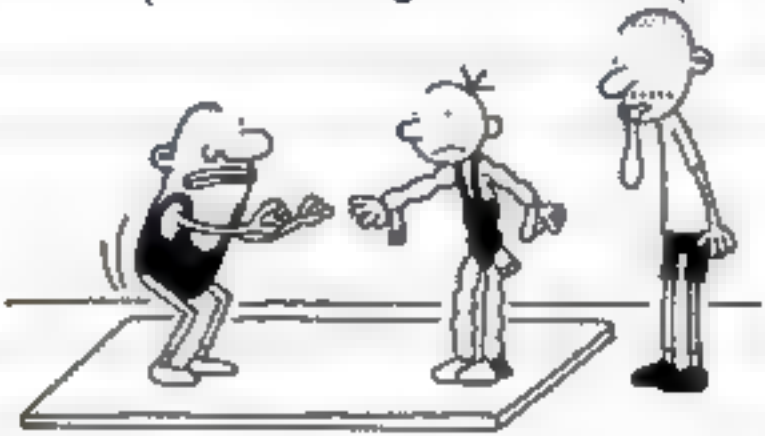
The worst thing is that all the bullies in the school have a free pass to do whatever they want. Teachers can't tell the difference between kids rehearsing their wrestling moves and regular bullying.

So far, I've managed to avoid any real danger by planting myself near the recess monitors. But that hasn't stopped Kenny Keith and his gang from asking me if I wanted to "practice" wrestling every three minutes.

I guess Kenny still hasn't forgiven me for the soccer fiasco.

My other problem is that I still have to wrestle Stinky Williams. I had this idea today that if I can move out of his weight class, Mr. Underwood won't make me wrestle him anymore.

So I brought in a bunch of socks from home and stuffed my clothes with them. But I still weighed in about 15 pounds too light to move up.



I WOULD just try to gain weight the natural way by gorging myself at lunch every day. But with no snacks, thats practically impossible. I know I'm not going to gain 15 pounds on carrot sticks and pears.

Saturday, December 18th

Today Mom made a gingerbread house, like she does every year. The timing couldn't be worse. I've been so starved for sweets lately that I'm tempted to just break off a whole wall and stuff it in my mouth.

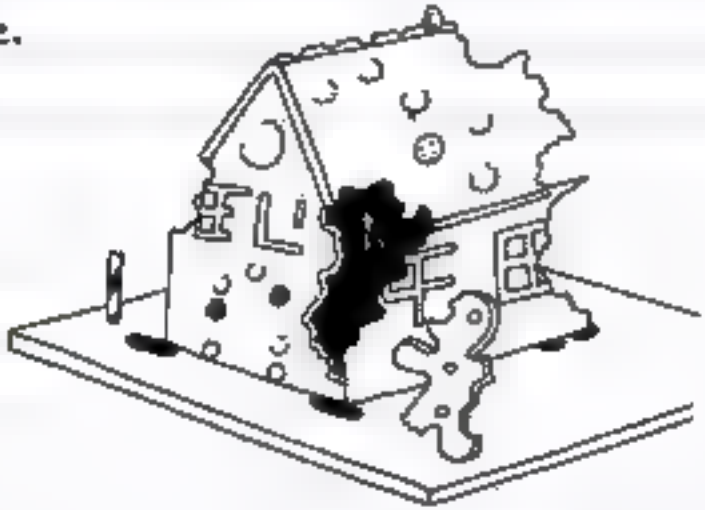
But Mom's gingerbread houses aren't for eating, they're just for decoration. She uses them as a centerpiece for the table on Christmas Eve.

Last year she made a gingerbread house the day after Thanksgiving, and it sat in our fridge for a month.

I would sneak into the kitchen every night and lift the lid on the gingerbread house and break off a gumdrop or some frosting. It took all of my self control to eat such a small amount each time, but I figured nobody would know the difference if I just took one more little piece.

I didn't get caught, either. Everything was great until Christmas Eve, when Mom took the gingerbread house out of the refrigerator and put it on the dining room table.

I guess I let things get out of control. When I saw it in the full light, I practically couldn't even tell it was supposed to be a gingerbread house anymore.



The back walls were so eaten away that the whole thing fell apart into a pile of gingerbread crumbs after about five seconds.

Somehow Mom knew it was me who did it. I tried to deny it, but she knew I was lying anyway.

Unfortunately, this was right around the time when Mom started writing a "family advice" column for our newspaper, and she was always looking for material.

So thanks to the gingerbread house, a couple days after Christmas, I was a local celebrity.

Ann Heffley

When your child is being deceptive

The weeks leading up to Christmas can be a source of stress for a child and can harbor unforseen temptations. My son, Gregory,

Sunday, December 19th

I've been complaining to Mom all weekend about how I have no money, and how I can't buy anything in the cafeteria when someone steals the snacks. Rodrick's been griping about money lately, too, so I guess Mom got sick of it. She came up with this new system called "Mom Bucks."

Mom Bucks are toy money Mom must've taken out of some board game. The basic idea is that me and Rodrick can earn Mom Bucks by doing good deeds. Then, we can exchange our Mom Bucks for real cash or use them to get out of doing chores and stuff like that.

Mom started each of us out with 500 Mom Bucks, so I thought I had struck it rich. But then Mom told us that each Mom Buck was only worth one cent in real money.

Before Mom was even done explaining all the rules, Rodrick cashed in his whole stash to get out of doing the dishes for the week.

If Rodrick wants to blow his money like that, he can go right ahead. But me, I'm going to hold on to my Mom Bucks. Because you never know when there's going to be an emergency.

In fact, I asked Mom if there was any "good deed" I could do to start adding to my bankroll right away. Mom thought about it for a minute, then said that if I put my drawing skills to work and made Christmas cards for the kids in my class, she'd give me 20 Mom Bucks a card.

I started drawing before she had a chance to do the math and rethink the offer. There are something like 250 kids in my grade, and in trade-in value that translates to five Twinkies a day for the rest of the school year.

But coming up with a message for each kid in my class was actually a lot harder than I thought. I tried to say something nice on each card without getting too mushy.

FRONT

Wishing your family all the best for the holiday season...

BACK

Oh yeah... isn't your dad being investigated for tax evasion?

Well, good luck with that.

Greg Heffley

After about an hour, Mom came upstairs to check on my progress. She read over the cards I had done, and then told me that it wouldn't be necessary to draw any more. Then she scooped them up in her arms and headed back downstairs.

I assumed she was putting stamps on them and taking them out to the mailbox. But later on, I found the cards in the garbage can in the kitchen.

Hey, I don't care what she does with them, so long as I get paid.

Monday, December 20th

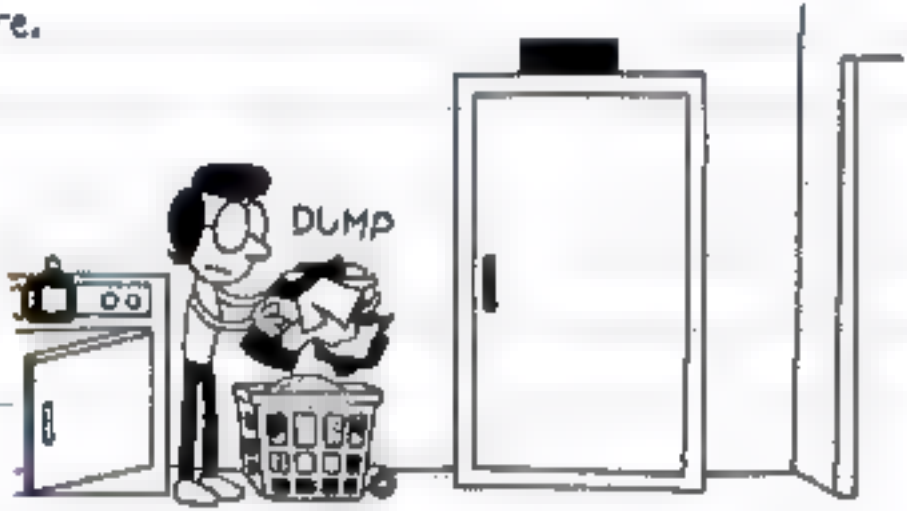
Well, Mom stiffed me on the Christmas cards, so now I still didn't have any money to buy snacks. I knew I had to do something drastic to catch the snack thief once and for all, or I would never find another Ho Ho at the bottom of my lunch bag.

I decided I was going to have to catch the perpetrator red-handed. So I went into the laundry room, hid in a basket with a camera and a flashlight, and waited in the dark.

An hour went by without anything happening, but I stayed super alert with the camera at the ready.

Finally, someone came in the room. I could see from the person's outline in the doorway that it was Mom, so I ducked under my shirt to keep hidden.

Mom was just in there to take the clothes out of the dryer. She unloaded them right into the basket I was in, and she didn't notice me hiding there.

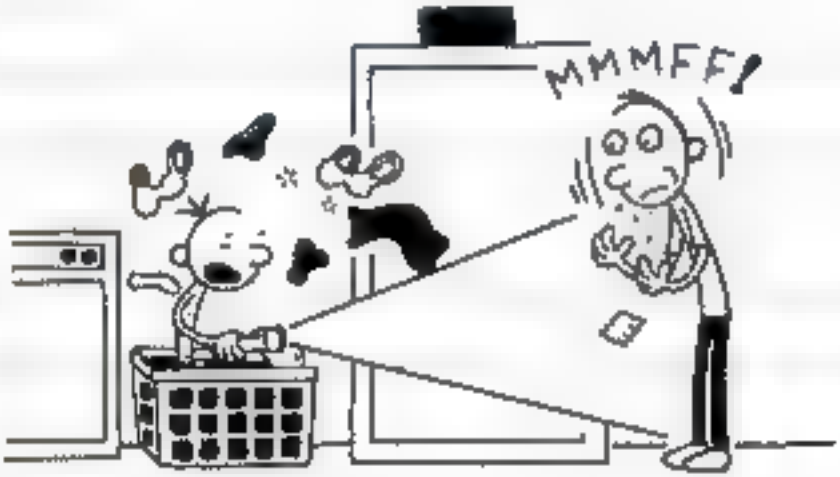


She left without taking any snacks, so at least I could rule one person out for sure.

Now we were down to Rodrick and Manny. I sat there for a while thinking about how great it was going to be to nab one of them. But those clothes Mom dumped on me were really warm and made me totally sleepy, so before I knew it, I was zonked out.

I don't even know how long I slept. All I know is that if someone else hadn't come into the laundry room, I would have slept there all night. I was in a kind of dreamy haze when it happened. I didn't really come to my senses until I heard some crinkling wrappers and some heavy duty munching.

As soon as I realized what was going on, I snapped into action. I turned on my flashlight and aimed it toward the sound, and you would never believe what I saw.



Dad! It was Dad. He had been the snack thief all along. I couldn't even believe it.

Once he was caught, I waited for him to explain himself. He has put me through a lot of grief, and I wanted to hear what he had to say.

But I had to wait a while. When I jumped out at him, I think he swallowed a Star Crunch whole, so it took a minute for him to choke it down.

Once Dad started speaking, he didn't seem too interested in explaining himself or apologizing. He seemed a whole lot more concerned with what I was doing in a pile of Mom's pajamas in the dark with a flashlight.

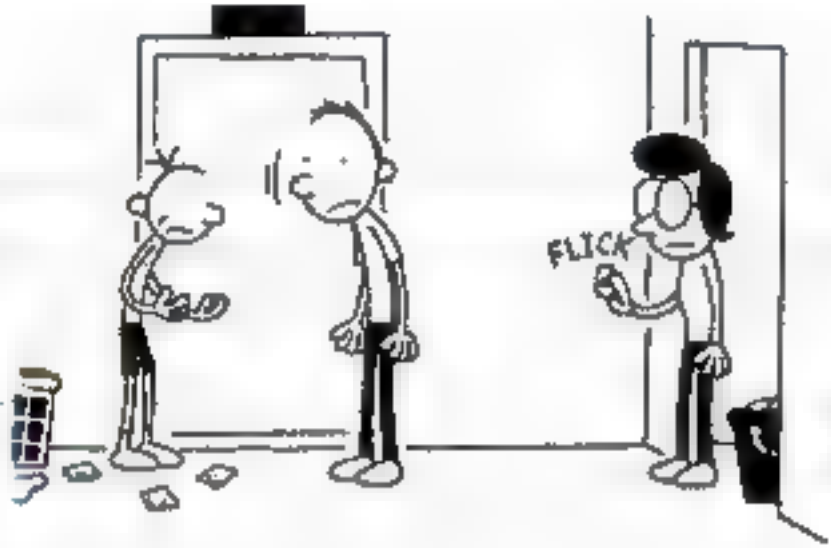
But I wasn't going to let him distract me and squirm out of this one. I asked him what he was doing, taking all of our lunch snacks every night.

Dad explained himself by saying that when there is junk food in the house, he can't stop himself from eating it.

He went on and on about how it's really Mom's fault for buying that type of food for our lunches, and how if she got stuff that wasn't so "tempting," he wouldn't have a problem controlling himself.

What I wasn't hearing in his speech was any kind of apology or a promise not to do it again. So while Dad was talking, I polished off the three Star Crunches that were still in the bin.

Eventually, Mom came back in the room with more laundry. She turned on the light and took a minute to observe the scene in front of her.



There I was with chocolate all over my hands with wrappers scattered everywhere, so I knew what it looked like.

I made a bold decision right then and there that might seem dumb to some people, but I think it might be the smartest thing I ever dreamed up.

I decided to bail Dad out and make it look like it was me who was taking the snacks, and not the other way around. See, Dad's cholesterol is really high, and I knew that Dad would get in a whole lot more trouble with Mom for eating junk food than I would.

I acted like I was in the middle of apologizing to Dad, and promising I wouldn't do it again. It took a minute for Dad to catch on, but once he did, he went with it.

Mom didn't even get involved. I think she was happy enough just to see us resolve the issue peacefully, and she walked between us to the washing machine without saying a word.

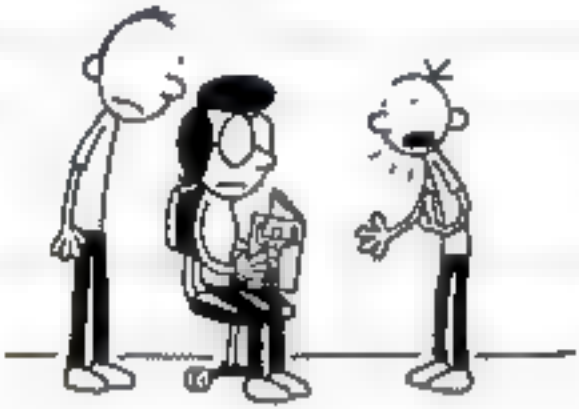
You might think I made a really stupid move, but just watch, my sacrifice is going to pay off big. Dad really owes me for this one, and it's good to have him in my debt.

I figure at the very least, he'll get me my own supply of snacks each week so he can keep raiding the general supply. I'll be happy to look the other way if we strike up that kind of bargain. And who knows? Maybe I can squeeze a lot more out of him than that.

Tuesday, December 21st

I've been thinking a lot lately about the idea of gaining 20 pounds to move out of Stinky Williams' weight class in wrestling. I always figured I'd just fatten up on a bunch of junk food, but now I have a different plan: I'm going to gain my weight in MUSCLE, not fat.

I decided to spring my plan on Mom and Dad tonight and ask them to get me a souped-up exercise center for home. I borrowed one of those body builder magazines from Albert Sandy and showed it to Mom and Dad to plead my case.



Now, I've never really had much use for muscles before, but this wrestling unit has really created a crisis for me. And I figure that if I bulked up, it would actually solve some problems later on down the road.

See, the football unit is coming in the spring, and the teams always gets split up into shirts and skins. I think Mr. Underwood puts all the kids who are out of shape on skins as a joke, because that's always where I end up.

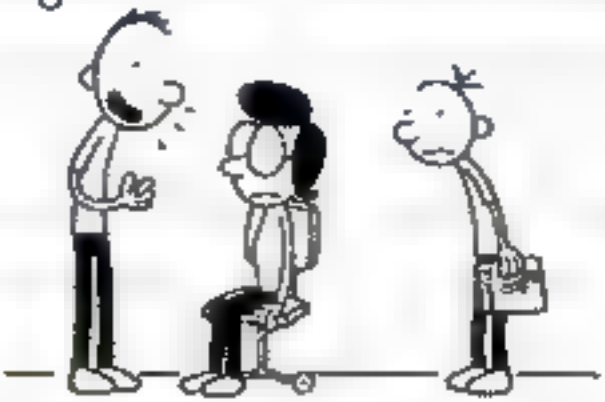
I figure if I can pack on some muscles, I can surprise everybody when April rolls around.

Anyway, I thought Mom would be enthusiatic about my idea, because she's always complaining that I don't exercise. But she flipped through the body builder magazine with a sour look on her face and said what those men were doing to themselves was "mutilation."

Then she said if I wanted a weight set, I was going to have to prove that I could stick with an exercise regimen by doing sit-ups and jumping jacks for three days straight.

I was like, sit-ups and jumping jacks are for sissies! I tried to explain how the only way to get totally ripped is to have the kind of high-tech machines they have in these magazines, but she wouldn't budge.

Dad, on the other hand, was really enthusiastic. He told me if I wanted a bench press, I should keep my fingers crossed for Christmas.



I was like, Christmas? Time is running out here! One more day of wrestling Stinky Williams and my skin is going to peel off.

But I realized that was the best I was going to do. If I want to get buff, I'm going to have to take matters into my own hands.

I was getting ready to go upstairs, but Mom said that as long as we were all together, she had an announcement to make. She said that from now on, the lunch snacks would be under lock and key in her filing cabinet so there would be no further "indiscretions."

Hey, that's good news for me. I'm perfectly fine with the idea of my food being protected.

But Dad seemed pretty shocked by this news. He told Mom that he should probably have a key, too, for "backup."

Mom shot down the idea and tucked the key away in her pocket. So I think she must be on to him.

If Dad thinks that this new development changes the fact that he owes me big time for what happened last night, he's got another thing coming.

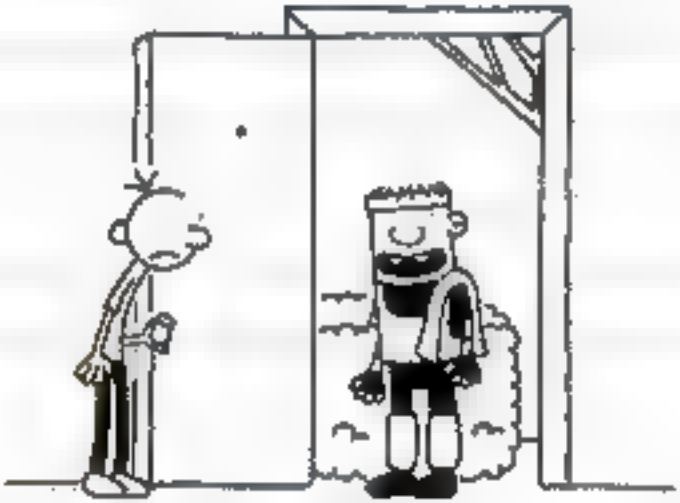
Wednesday, December 22nd

I couldn't wait to get home from school today so I could start my weight training program.

Even though Mom wouldn't get me the equipment I needed to do things the right way, I wasn't going to let that hold me back. So I went in the fridge and emptied out the milk and orange juice, filled the containers up some sand I found in the garage, and fastened them to a broom handle to make a pretty decent barbell.

Then I made a bench press out of an ironing board and some boxes. Once I had that all set, I was ready to do some serious lifting.

I made the mistake of calling up Rowley and asking him to be my training partner. He took about an hour to come down the hill, and when he showed up at my door, he was wearing this ridiculous getup.



I thought about just closing the door on him and working out on my own, but I've read that every weightlifter needs a good spotting partner. So I figured I better keep him around.

Rowley was the first one to use the bench press, mostly because I wanted to see if the broom handle was going to hold up.

He did about five reps, and was ready to quit, but I wouldn't let him. That's what your training partner is for, to push you beyond your limits.

I had a suspicion that even though Rowley showed up to work out, he wasn't going to be as serious as I was about weight lifting. So I decided to try an experiment.

While Rowley was doing his reps, I went and got a phony nose and mustache Rodrick has in his junk drawer. Then, when Rowley had the barbell in the the "down" position, I showed my face to him to see what he would do.

Sure enough, Rowley busted out laughing and TOTALLY lost his concentration. He couldn't even lift the barbell off of his chest.

I thought about helping him get it off of him, but then I thought that if Rowley didn't learn that he needs to get serious about weightlifting, he's never going to get to where he needs to be.

So Rowley tried to roll the barbell down his body while I read up on some weight gain powder I'm thinking about getting.

I eventually had to bail Rowley out, because when he couldn't roll the barbell past his hips, he tried biting a hole in the milk jug to let the sand leak out.

After getting the barbell back in place on the boxes, I got ready to do my set. But Rowley said he didn't feel like working out anymore, and he went home. I kind of figured he'd pull something like that. I guess you can't expect everyone to have the same dedication you do.

Thursday, December 23rd

Today when I walked to the bus stop, I saw Rowley holding a Christmas present. It made me realize I've been so focused on weightlifting that I haven't hardly thought about Christmas at all. Then, all of the sudden, I realized why Rowley had a present... today was Secret Santa day at our school!

Man, I TOTALLY forgot to get a Secret Santa gift. I was assigned to Byron Brown, and I didn't have a thing to give him. I started scrounging around in my backpack for something I could use as a gift, but there was nothing in there but an old baloney sandwich.

Then, right before the bus came, Mom pulled up and honked the horn. She handed me a gift for Byron, wrapped and everything. I'm super lucky she keeps track of that type of thing.

I peeled off some of the wrapping paper to find out what the gift was, and it was one of those LifeSavers book things with about 10 packs of candy in it. I was pretty psyched, because the only candy Byron can eat is sugar-free. So the LifeSavers were as good as mine.

In eighth period, we did our Secret Santa exchange. I was hoping Chirag drew my name, because his mom always goes WAY over the three-dollar limit.

But someone else must have gotten my name, because I got stuck with a cheap foam cup holder that I'll bet cost 25 cents.

The Secret Santa exchange took forever, and I had to sit there trying to entertain myself with the cup holder while everyone around me was eating their chocolate and playing with their toys.

The way the Secret Santa thing works is that the teacher picks out a gift and says, "To Greg Heffley from Secret Santa" or something like that. But when she got to my gift, she read what Mom wrote on the package:

I guess Mom doesn't get the whole "Secret" part of "Secret Santa."

I tried to brace myself for the reaction, but the kids in my class really let me have it.

I can't say I really blame them. Because if it had been me on the other side, I would have done the same exact thing.

When I got home, I was ready to blow off some steam on the bench press. But Dad told me we were going to have to run some errands, and my workout would have to wait.

We went to the store to pick up a gift for the Giving Tree at church. It's basically a Secret Santa kind of thing where you get a gift for someone who's needy.

Mom told Dad to pick up an extra large wool sweater for our Giving Tree guy. I tried to talk Dad into getting something cool for him instead, like a remote control car. Because imagine if you opened your one Christmas gift, and it was a wool sweater.

I'm sure our Giving Tree guy will put the sweater out in the trash, along with all the yams we sent his way during the canned food drive in November.

Friday, December 24th (Christmas Eve)

This morning when I woke up I realized I hadn't bought a single gift for anyone yet. Plus, I didn't even have any money. But Mom let me cash in some Mom Bucks at a higher rate so I could buy some gifts for people in the family.

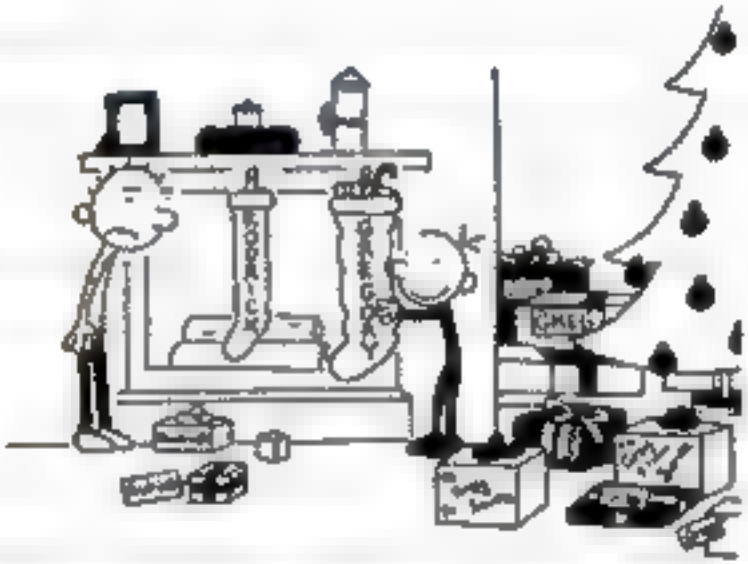
Me, Mom, Dad and Manny spent most of the day at the mall. On the drive back home, it was dark out. Dad noticed a blinking red light way up in the sky and pointed it out to Manny.

Now, I knew it was just a plane and not Rudolph's red nose, but I wasn't about to say anything in front of Mom and Dad.

I remember when Rodrick was a kid, and Mom and Dad told him if he didn't behave, Santa was going to find out. But Rodrick said:

I had never heard anything so insane in my entire life.

On Christmas morning that year, Rodrick really paid the price. I got the normal amount of gifts from Santa, but the only gifts Rodrick got were from Mom and Dad.



I learned my lesson from that one. Believe me, you'll never see me making the same kind of mistake Rodrick made. Doing that is like guaranteeing you'll get 90% less gifts on Christmas morning.

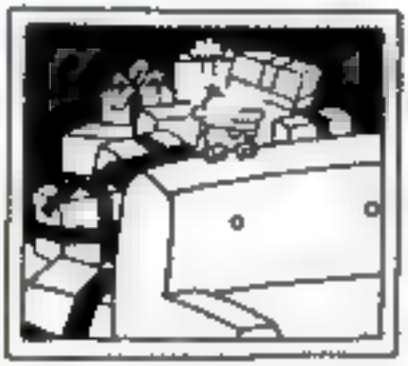
So whenever Mom and Dad mention Santa, I make sure they know I'm still on board with the whole concept.

They've tried to sit me down for the "Santa Talk" a bunch of times, but I've always found some excuse to get out of it. I'm hoping I can keep this up until I'm at least out of high school.

After dinner, we put ornaments up on the Christmas tree.

Every year me and Manny fight over who gets to put their gifts behind the couch in the corner of the living room on Christmas day. The corner is prime real estate because you can stack all your presents back there and take your time opening them without being disturbed by anyone.

Mom said I got the corner last year, so it was Manny's turn to get it this year. But I pulled out last year's Christmas album and showed her a picture that proved my case.



Later on tonight, I heard Manny throwing a fit in Mom's room.

Mom thought Manny was upset about losing the corner or that he was just overly excited about Christmas being tomorrow, but I knew the real story.

See, Mom and Dad have been keeping all of the Christmas gifts in Dad's closet in their bedroom.

They bought all of Manny's presents about two months ago, and he found them hidden in there right away. So he's been playing with his Christmas toys every night since October, and tonight Dad must have moved them down to his workroom to wrap them. So when Manny went to play with his gifts, they were nowhere to be found.

Anyway, Mom put Manny to bed early, which ended up being a good thing. Mom had been talking about having the whole family sing Christmas carols around the piano tonight, and I was pretty glad to get out of that one.

After Manny went to bed, I went downstairs to get myself a glass of milk and maybe watch some t.v. But Mom and Dad were in the kitchen wrapping presents right out in the open. They weren't even trying to hide it or anything. In fact, I think they let themselves get caught on purpose.

So I guess that qualifies as the "Santa Talk."

Saturday, December 25th (Christmas)

I don't think I slept at all last night. When I heard Manny go downstairs at 5:30 this morning, I got out of bed and went down to join him.

The first sign that things had changed for me was when I checked out my stocking. I usually get a ton of comic books, candy, toys, and stuff like that, but today, the best things in my stocking were a stick of deodorant and a "travel dictionary."

Mom and Dad don't let us go into the living room until they come downstairs on Christmas, so I had to amuse myself with the gifts from my stocking until they woke up. And let me tell you, it's not easy to keep yourself entertained with deodorant and a travel dictionary.

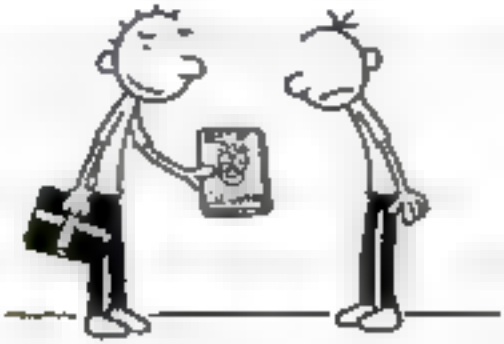
Mom and Dad finally showed up around 8:00, and we were allowed in the living room. There seemed to be the usual amount of gifts under the tree, which was a good sign. So I started digging through the packages to look for the ones with my name on them.

EVERY single gift that said "From Santa" on it had Manny's name on it. So I guess this is really the end of an era.

I did get a bunch of gifts from Mom and Dad, though. I picked them all out and stacked them up behind the couch in the corner. But I didn't open them yet, because I wanted to give everyone in the family their gifts to get that out of the way. I started with Mom and Dad. I get them the same kind of thing each year, but it seems to do the trick.

I gave Manny a toy helicopter and I gave Rodrick a book with a bunch of rock band pictures in it.

Rodrick gave me a book, too, but of course he didn't wrap his. And the book he got me was "The Best of Lil Cutie," which was a double insult.

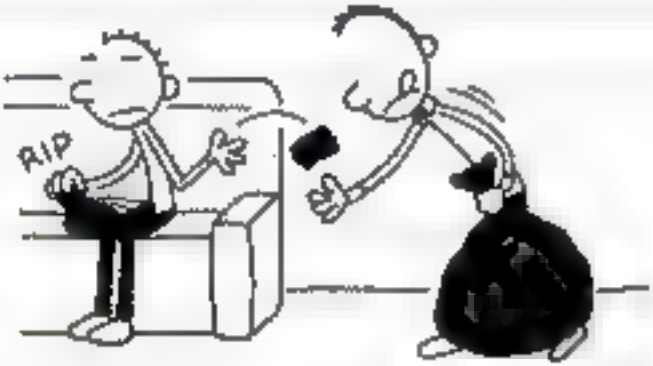


First of all, Rodrick knows full well that I hate that comic, and second, he gave me the exact same book last year. But I wasn't going to let Rodrick ruin my Christmas.

The rest of the relatives started showing up around 11:00, and Christmas could start for real.

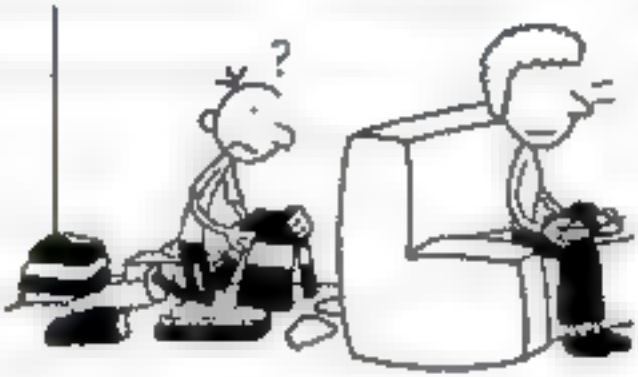
I took my position behind the couch and started opening my gifts. Like I said before, I like to open my gifts back there because nobody can hassle you. But I also like being in the corner because Dad really makes me nervous when I open my gifts out in the open.

Dad can't stand to have wrapping paper all over the floor, so whenever someone opens a gift, he swoops right in and cleans up after them. So it kind of takes the fun out of ripping into your gifts.



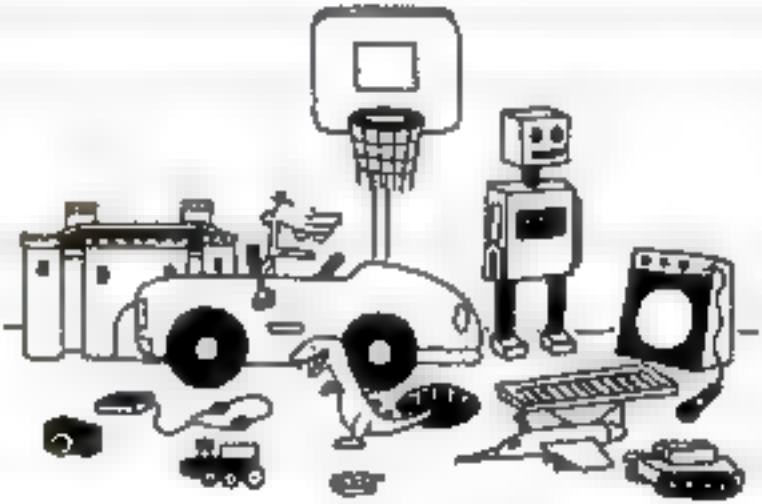
Just about every gift I opened was clothes. It was a good thing I was hidden behind the couch, because if anyone saw the look on my face, they would have thought I bit into a lemon.

The weird thing was that every shirt or pair of pants was either maroon or yellow, or both. I couldn't figure out what was up.



I took a break from opening up rugby shirts to see what Rodrick and Manny were getting. Rodrick was getting clothes, too, but at least his weren't all the same colors.

As for Manny, well, remember how I said that he circled every single toy in the Sears Catalog, and how I warned him not to get greedy? Well, he should be glad he didn't listen to my advice, because he got EVERY single thing he circled, no lie.



Mom called me and Manny over to Aunt Mary Lou so she could give us her gifts. I dragged my feet on the way over there because Aunt Mary Lou always gives me and Manny the same thing: matching Christmas sweaters.

And sure enough, that's exactly what she got us this year.

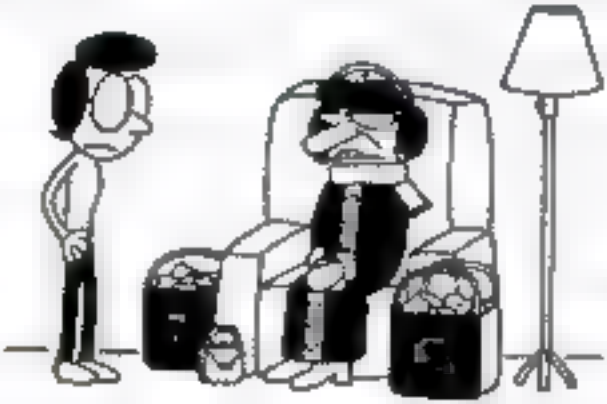
The only good news is that since Aunt Mary Lou's Christmas sweater always has a reindeer or a Christmas tree on it, I'm exempt from wearing it to school after the Christmas break. So that always gives me enough time to quietly dispose of the sweater before the next holiday season rolls around.

Before Manny was born, Aunt Mary Lou used to get matching outfits for me and Rodrick.

But Aunt Mary Lou has been getting really batty over the years, and lately, I've started to wonder if she actually thinks I'm Rodrick and Manny is me. Mary Lou said something to Rodrick today that pretty much confirmed my theory.

And speaking of batty old aunts, Aunt Loretta showed up around noon with her bag of gifts. But apparently, Mom had forgotten to formally invite Aunt Loretta over for Christmas, so Aunt Loretta was really ticked off.

Everyone knows we have Christmas at our house every year, but Aunt Loretta was miffed she didn't get a phone call. It was an honest mistake on Mom's part, but Aunt Loretta wouldn't accept Mom's apology. So Aunt Loretta just sat there in the study and refused to take her coat off.



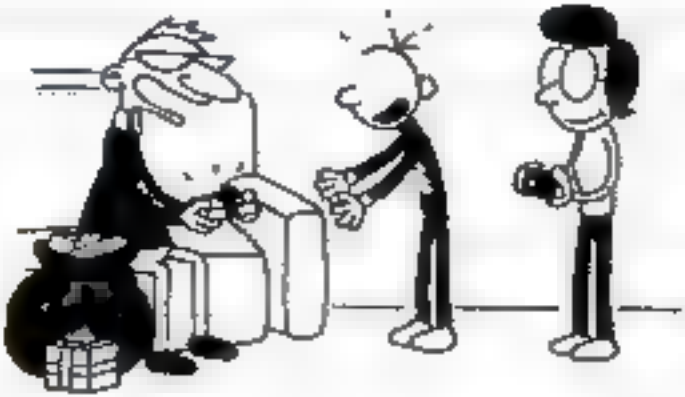
Uncle Joe eventually showed up with his kids and a bag of gifts. I opened up my present from Uncle Joe, and darned if it wasn't another maroon and yellow rugby shirt. I really couldn't figure out what the heck was going on, but when Mom made me put on the shirt, Uncle Joe said something that suddenly made everything crystal clear.

Now I understood... this was all a set up! Maroon and gold are the colors of the school uniform at Bishop Garrigan, and Mom and Dad are sending me there after all. They must have told everyone to get me clothes in those colors, because that's where they're going to send me for high school.

Man, I thought I put an end to this a couple weeks ago when I deleted that message from the admissions department.

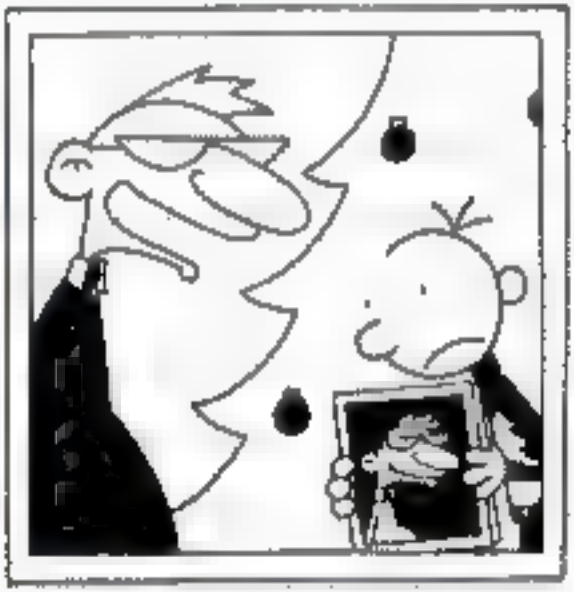
But I must have underestimated Mom and Dad. And talk about bad timing. Christmas Day is the worst time to find out your worst fear has come true. Anyway, I was really down in the dumps until Uncle Freddie came to the door, and the sight of him totally changed my mood.

Uncle Freddie always gets you the one thing you asked for, which for me was the new video game Twisted Wizard Black. So seeing Uncle Freddie totally made me forget about Bishop Garrigan, at least for a minute.



When I held Uncle Freddie's gift in my hands, I knew exactly what it was from the size and weight of it. I gave him a big hug before I even opened it.

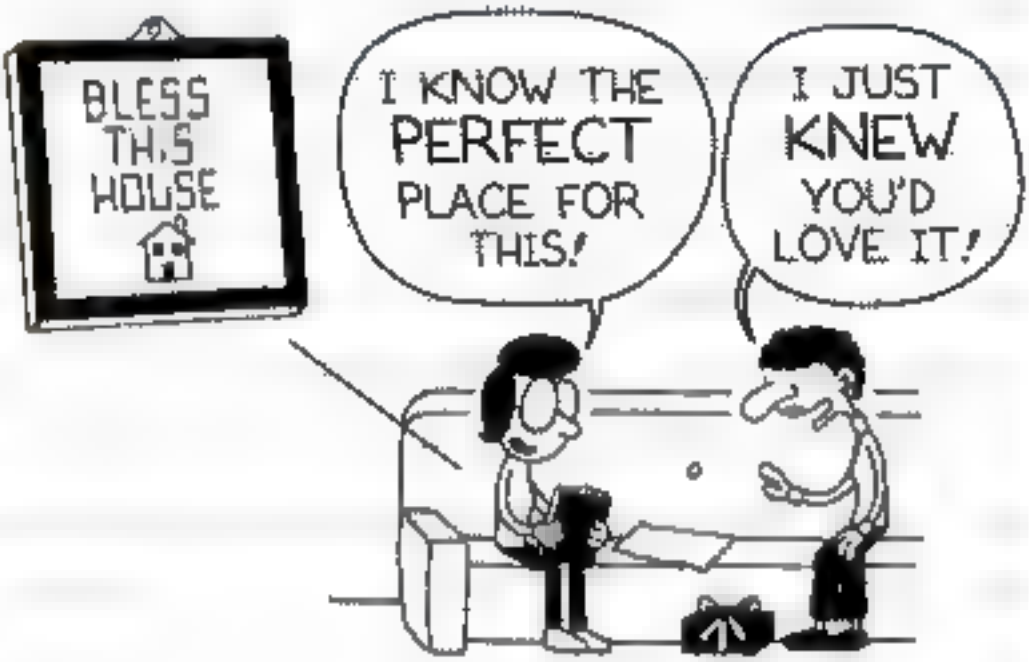
So imagine my disappointment when I unwrapped the present, and it was NOT Twisted Wizard Black.



Who gives an 8 x 10 picture of himself as a Christmas gift? I didn't do a real good job of hiding my disappointment.

Mom took me aside and said my reaction to Uncle Freddie was "rude" and that I should apologize.

All I can say is, I'm glad I'm still a kid and I can get away with being honest about the way I feel about things. Because seeing the way Mom reacts to the gifts she gets makes me realize I couldn't pull it off.



At about 6:00, all of the relatives cleared out. Even Aunt Loretta, who stayed in her coat all that time.

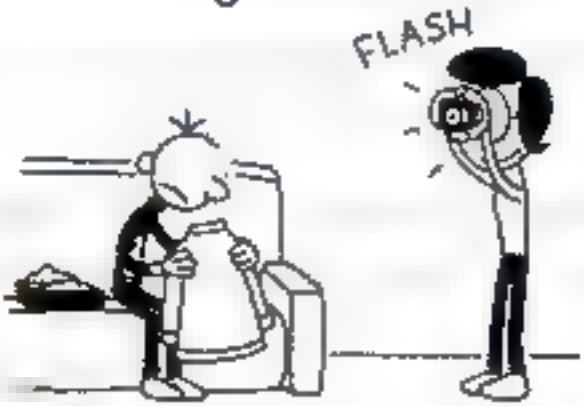
I was sitting on the couch watching Manny play with his toys, feeling pretty sorry for myself. Then Mom came up to me and said that she found a gift behind the piano with my name on it that said "From Santa."

Well, I had a feeling what it was. The box was way too big for Twisted Wizard Black, but Mom had pulled the "big box" trick on me last year when she bought me a memory card for my Game Boy. So I wasn't going to get fooled again.

I could barely contain myself when I ripped open the packaging.

I was so sure that I was getting my video game that I was completely shocked when I pulled out what was really in the box.

It was an extra large red wool sweater.



At first, I thought Mom was pulling a practical joke on me, because this sweater was the same kind we bought for our Giving Tree guy.

And after I saw the confused look on Mom's face, I realized something... it WAS the sweater we bought for the Giving Tree guy! Mom said that she had bought me a video game, and she had no idea why there was a sweater in my box.

I told her she must have accidentally switched our gifts, and that Dad must have dropped the wrong gift off at the church.

Mom said that's exactly what must have happened.... that I got the Giving Tree guy's gift and he got mine.

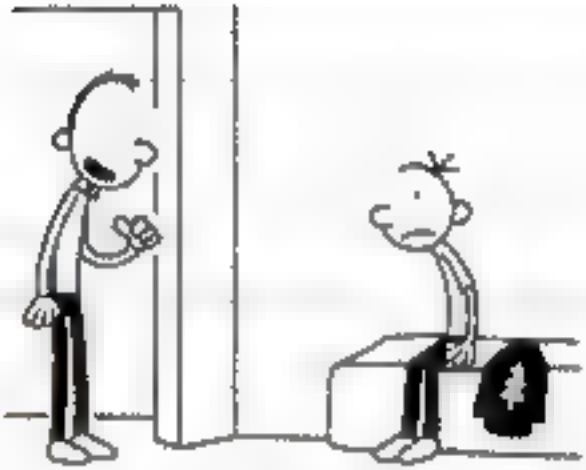
But then she said that in a way, this was like a Christmas Miracle, because the Giving Tree guy must be so overjoyed that he got such a great present from us.

But I had to explain to Mom that you need a game system, a t.v., and a controller to play Twisted Wizard Black, and that you can't just play it on its own.

So you can see that my Christmas did not go as smoothly as I had hoped for. But I'm sure it wasn't exactly the best Christmas for the Giving Tree guy, either.

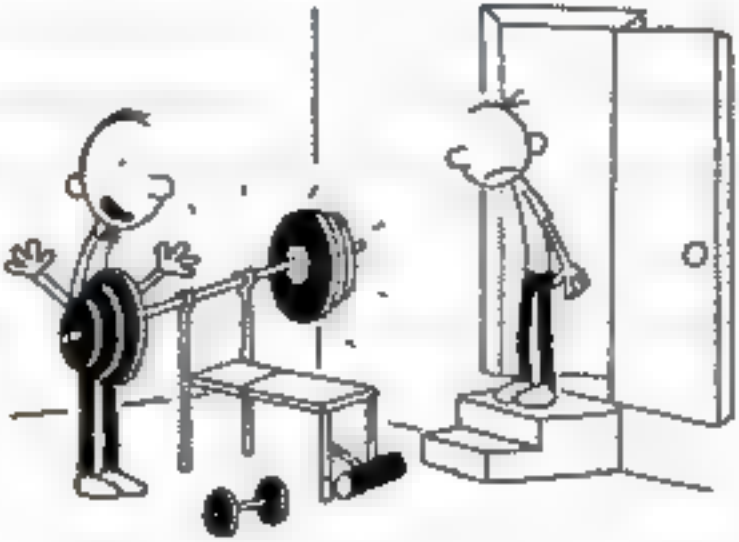
At about 7:00, I went upstairs to sulk in my room. About ten minutes later, I got a knock on my door, and it was Dad.

He told me he had gotten a gift for me that was out in the garage, and he hadn't shown it to me because he hadn't had time to wrap it.



At this point, I was not going to let my hopes get too high, but I was still pretty curious when I followed Dad downstairs.

And when I walked into the garage, there was a brand-new weight set.



I had seen that weight set in a magazine, and it must have cost Dad a few hundred dollars, at least.

But I didn't have the heart to tell Dad that I had kind of lost interest in the whole weight lifting thing, because the wrestling unit ended on Wednesday.

I said thanks to Dad and did my best job to act cheery. But I think Dad was expecting me to start working out right then and there, so I excused myself to go up to Rowley's so I could bring him his gift.

I'm just hoping Mom can get some use out of the weight set by hanging laundry on it or something.

Rowley's parents always hook me up with a good gift, so I was looking forward to seeing what they got me. This year, they gave me a giant jar filled with Gummi Bears. It's a step down from the two-foot Sugar Daddy they gave me last year, but it'll still do, especially today.

I gave Rowley my gift, which was the L'il Cutie book Rodrick gave me with a bow slapped on it.

Rowley told me he got Twisted Wizard Black for Christmas, so I invited myself in to play a while.

Boy, you have never seen someone so happy as Rowley with his L'il Cutie book. His Mom said it was the only thing he wanted that he didn't get for Christmas.

Which is pretty suprising, considering it's the same exact book I unloaded on him last year. Well, anyway.. at least someone got what they wanted this Christmas.

Sunday, December 26th

Today Mom went out to the store and picked me up a new copy of Twisted Wizard Black to replace the one that accidentally got sent to the Giving Tree guy. But Mom said that before I could start playing the game, I had to write all my Christmas thank-yous.

Now, I've never heard of someone holding your Christmas present hostage, but I knew I had to do what Mom said if I wanted my game.

She handed me a stack of thank-you cards and some envelopes and I went up to my room to get it over with.

I figured I could crank out my thank-you's in less than an hour and spend the rest of the day in front of the t.v. But when it came down to actually writing out the cards, my mind went blank.

Let me tell you, it's not easy writing thank-you notes for stuff you didn't want in the first place.

I decided I was just going to have to be a phony and grind these things out anyway. I started with the non-clothes items, because I thought they'd be easier. But after about two or three, I realized I was practically writing the same thing on every card, which gave me a brilliant idea.

I wrote up a general form on the computer with blanks for the things that needed to change. Then, I put all the cards Mom gave me through the printer.

Finishing the cards from there was a breeze.

Dear Aunt Lydia,

Thank you so much for the awesome encyclopedia! How did you know I wanted that for Christmas?

I love the way the encyclopedia looks on my shelf!

All my friends will be so jealous that I have my very own encyclopedia.

Thank you for making this the best Christmas ever!

Sincerely, Greg

My template worked really well for the first couple of gifts, but for the rest, I admit it didn't work so well.

Dear Aunt Loretta,

Thank you so much for the awesome pants!
How did you know I wanted that for Christmas?

I love the way the pants looks on my legs!

All my friends will be so jealous that I have my very own pants.

Thank you for making this the best Christmas ever!

Sincerely, Greg

Oh well, what can you do? At least I was done in less than 15 minutes. I was smart enough to seal up the cards before handing them off to Mom, and I got my game, just like she promised.

Monday, December 27th

For the past couple of days, my house has been like Upside-Down World. First of all, Dad has been helping Rodrick put together a model rocket Rodrick got for Christmas, so now all of the sudden the two of them are like best friends.

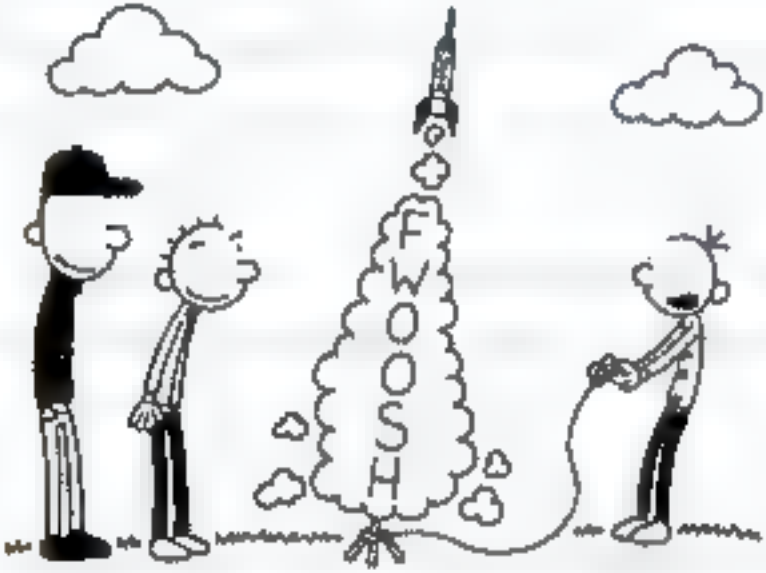
Second, I have had to stop playing video games, even though Christmas break is my prime video game-playing week. It's all because of Twisted Wizard Black, which is officially the dumbest game in the world. The way you get your character to run around in the game is to press the A and B buttons over and over as fast as you can, and I swear I must have run 20 miles in the game so far.

So now my thumbs are covered in blisters, and I can barely even tie my shoes, let alone use my game controller.

I was lying in bed trying to figure out a way I could actually play using only my feet when Dad knocked on the door and asked me if I wanted to go to the park with Rodrick to launch his rocket. I figured that was a better idea than the one I was working on, so I went along for the ride.

It had taken Rodrick and Dad something like 15 hours to put that rocket together, because it had about a million little parts. It even had a tiny camera in it that was supposed to take a picture when the parachute opened.

When we got to the park, Dad and Rodrick set the rocket up on its launch pad. But then Rodrick told me I could press the button to launch the rocket if I wanted. So I guess now all of the sudden Rodrick is nice to me.



The rocket shot about 300 feet straight up in the air and the parachute opened. But then the wind took it, and the rocket started drifting way across the field and over a hill. We all chased after it.

But after the rocket cleared the hill, we lost sight of it. Dad and Rodrick were real nervous because after spending all that time putting the rocket together, they were afraid it was going to get lost or broken.

We decided to split up and start looking for it. Dad said he'd cover the football field with Rodrick if I'd look in the woods. That was fine with me, because the football field is where all the dog-walkers let their pets go to the bathroom.

After about an hour of looking for the rocket, Rodrick and Dad were ready to give up. But at the last second, I found the rocket in a tree, and it was in perfect shape.

I got the rocket down with a stick, and then I ran it over to the field where Dad and Rodrick were packing up the launching pad. I was kind of excited because I knew I was going to be the hero of the day.

But unfortunately in my excitement I let my feet get out from under me and I fell right onto the rocket.

Luckily Dad and Rodrick didn't see it happen, so I picked up the crushed rocket and walked over to the field where they were.

It might be Upside Down World, but if there's one thing you can count on to stay the same, it's that I'm always going to cover my own butt.

Tuesday, December 28th

The past couple of days, I've been thinking a lot about something Albert Sandy said right before the Christmas break started. He claimed he knew a guy whose cousin figured out a way you could jump your own height in five days.

The basic idea is that on the first day, you dig a hole that's two inches deep, then you jump in and out of it ten times. Then on the next day, you double the size of the hole, and jump in and out ten times again. And if you keep doubling the size of the hole, by day five, you're practically like a kangaroo.

Everyone was telling Albert he's full of baloney, because he has a reputation for making stuff up. And I have to admit, if Albert knew such an easy way to jump that high, you would think he'd be dunking basketballs at recess to impress the girls.

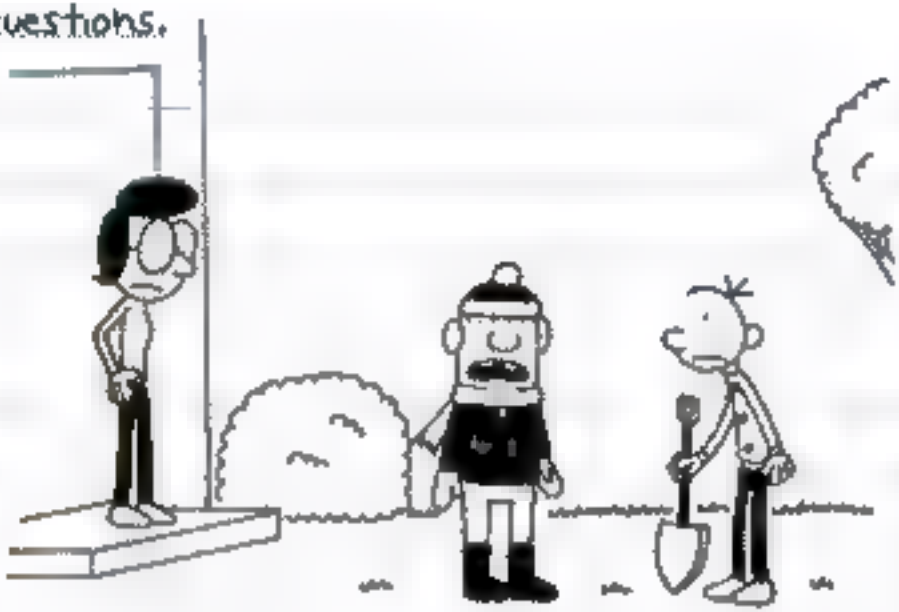
But his plan made a lot of sense to me. And it doesn't take a genius to see that if you just add another day to the program, you can jump even higher than Albert said.

All I can say is, I hope Albert is right, because if Mom and Dad are going to ship me off to Bishop Garrigan, I need any kind of edge I can get.

Anyway, since I had a couple of days to spare, I figured I'd give the idea a try.

I called up Rowley to be my training partner, even though I knew from our weightlifting experience that he had zero dedication. But I figured since this was only five or six days' worth of commitment, I might be able to get him to stick with the program.

Once Rowley got to my house, we started looking for a good place for our hole. But Mom spotted us walking around with a shovel, and she had a lot of questions.



When I explained to her what we were doing, she said she didn't want her front lawn "ruined" by a hole, and besides that, it was dangerous to dig in your lawn because of buried electrical lines and blah blah blah. To make a long story short, we went up to Rowley's house to do our digging there, instead.

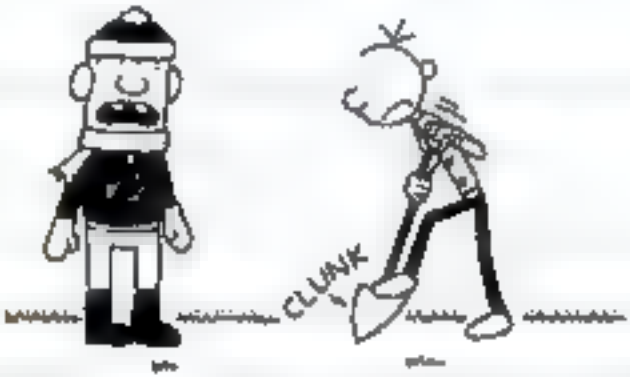
But Rowley was worried his parents might feel the same way Mom did about a hole in their front yard, so I told him we'd cover it with a tarp and put some leaves on top of it and no one would ever know it was there.

After I convinced Rowley that nothing could go wrong, he got a tarp out of his shed that we could use to cover up the hole.

The truth is, I could think of plenty of ways it could go wrong. But I just kept those thoughts to myself, because I knew if I brought them up to Rowley, we'd never get any work done.

We found a spot in the front yard that looked good for digging and I started in on the hole, which only needed to be two inches deep.

But when I started shoveling, it was like trying to dig through granite.



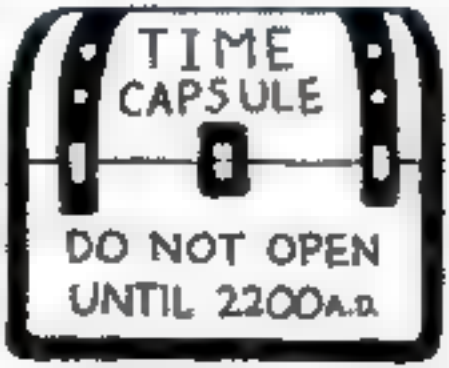
The ground was frozen SOLID. I couldn't even make a dent. All I can say is, if Albert Sandy was telling the truth, the guy in the story wasn't digging his holes in the middle of the winter.

After a while, me and Rowley went inside for a five minute break, which turned into a three-hour Twisted Wizard session (my blisters had finally calloused over). I guess we'll take another stab at the hole-digging thing tomorrow.

Wednesday, December 29th

Today it was even colder than yesterday, and I knew there was no way we were going to make any progress on our hole. But I had a brilliant idea to make use out of the hole we dug so far.

This summer, I read a story about some kid who buried a "time capsule," which was a box filled with a bunch of stuff like newspapers and trading cards and things like that. The idea is that someone will dig it up in the future and they can learn about how people like us used to live.



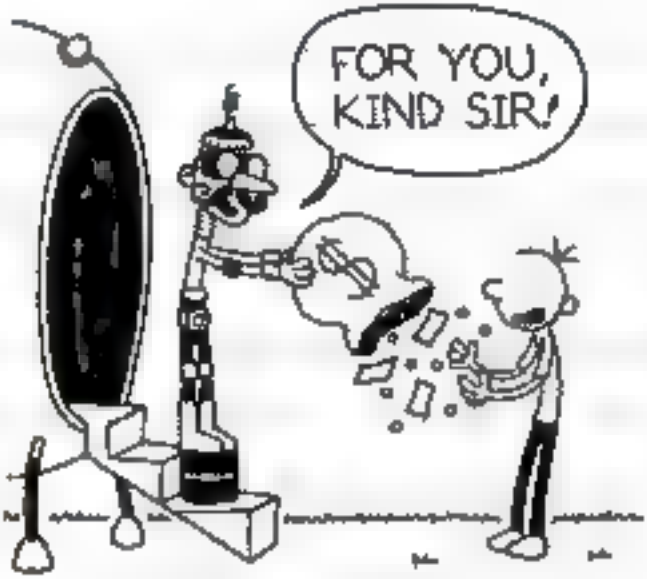
I figured me and Rowley could do the same kind of thing, so I went up to his house and told him my idea.

Rowley liked the idea, and I started collecting a bunch of things to put in the time capsule, like comic books, action figures and even a couple of video games.

But Rowley started griping about how all the stuff we were putting in the time capsule was gifts he got for Christmas, and it wasn't fair. I pointed out that I was the one who thought up the idea and I was supplying the shoebox. Plus, I mentioned how I was throwing in 100 Mom Bucks, which were worth a whole lot more than all his stuff combined.

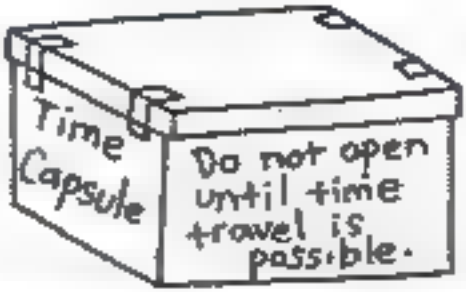
I admit I exaggerated the value of the Mom Bucks, because 100 Mom Bucks are only worth one dollar in real money. But I had a a secret plan for the Mom Bucks that I wasn't letting Rowley in on.

See, I figured whoever finds the Mom Bucks in the future will think it was the regular money we used in our time, and they'll make a fortune off of it. Then, hopefully they'll travel back in time and reward me for making them rich.



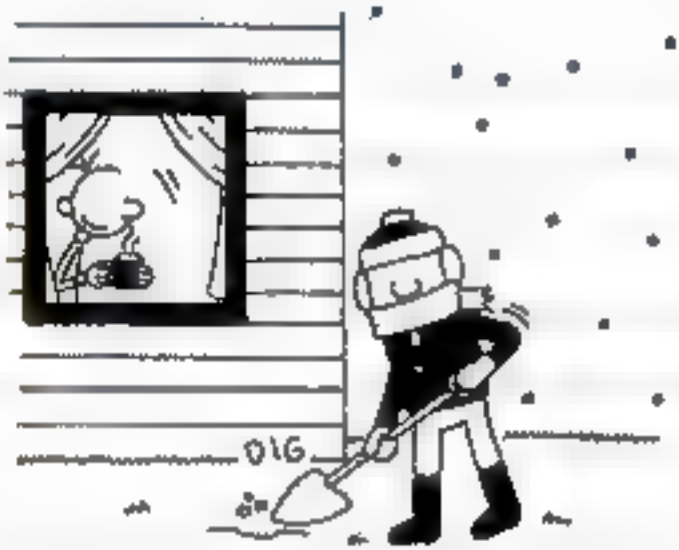
I know my idea is a little far-fetched, but right now, it's the best plan I have to avoid having to work for a living.

After about an hour of arguing over which things to put in the time capsule, we finally put the lid on the box and wrapped it up in Scotch tape.



We needed to make the hole a lot deeper to get the box in the ground, though. Luckily, it was snowing, so the ground was a little softer today than it was yesterday.

But it was still a tough job. Rowley suggested that we work in half-hour shifts, but I had to remind him that yesterday, I did all the work, so today, the shovel was all his.



Anyway, Rowley didn't make much progress at all. He kept coming inside complaining that his fingers and toes were numb, and I had to to keep pushing him back out the door to keep him going.

At around noon, I was getting pretty bored, so I decided the hole was deep enough. I brought the box outside and we put it into the hole, which was only about three inches deep. The final resting place ended up being more of a mound than a hole, but hopefully nobody will disturb it for 500 years or so.

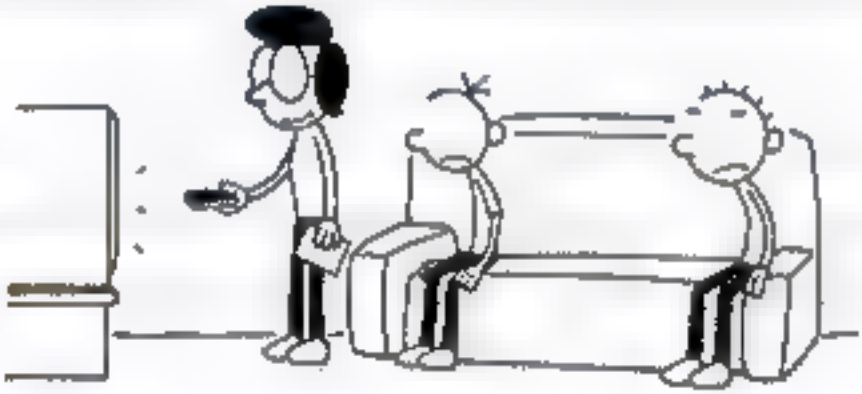
And while Rowley was digging outside, I slipped a note into the box to make sure whoever found the time capsule knew exactly who to thank.

To whom it may concern
The money is from
Greg Heffley
12 Prestwick Dr

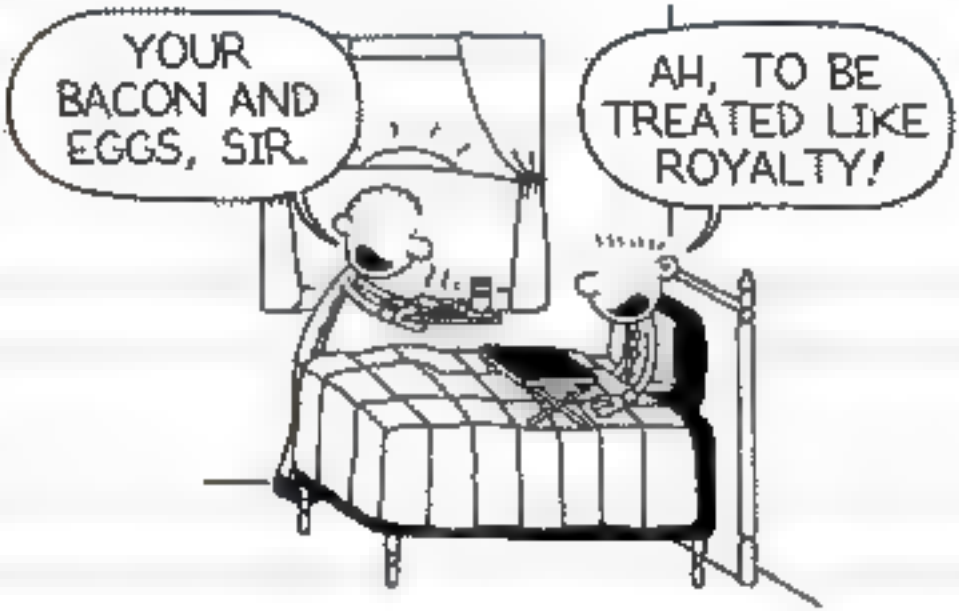
Thursday, December 30th

Well, Saturday is January 1st, so I guess I better start thinking about my New Years' resolutions. Last year, Mom came up with my resolutions, and Rodrick's, too.

Back then, me and Rodrick were fighting ALL the time, and Mom wanted to put a stop to it. So she sat us down on New Years Eve and made us watch this really corny movie.



The movie must have been 30 years old and it was about these goody-goody brothers who were always doing nice things for each other, like serving each other breakfast in bed.



After the movie ended, me and Rodrick got up to leave, but Mom stopped us in our tracks. She said, "Didn't that movie give you any ideas?"

I figured Mom just made us watch the movie as a punishment for fighting, and to be honest with you, I zoned out after the first five minutes.

But Mom said that she wanted me and Rodrick to make a New Year's resolution that we'd make an effort to treat each other nicely. And she wanted us to start doing good deeds for each other, just like the kids in the movie.

So Rodrick chimed in and said maybe we could start serving each other breakfast in bed, like those kids in the movie. That seemed to make Mom happy, and she left to let us work out the details.

At first I thought he was just trying to get Mom off his back, but then I realized he was serious. Rodrick said we could have a sort of contest where we'd see who could serve the other guy breakfast in bed for the most consecutive days.

We decided I'd go first. So on January 1st, I started bringing Rodrick his breakfast down to the basement. It was just a Pop Tart and a soda, but I never claimed to be a chef.

I went on a streak of 23 consecutive days, and the only reason my streak ended was because the electricity went out one night and my alarm clock didn't wake me up.

So then it was Rodrick's turn to start serving me.

But on the very first morning of Rodrick's shift, I woke up at 11:30 and realized he hadn't come upstairs with my breakfast. I was annoyed because I was really looking forward to the French Toast and scrambled eggs I had ordered up. So I went downstairs to see what was up.

All I can say is that that was the last dumb deal I ever made with Rodrick. And this year, believe me, I'm making my own resolutions.

Friday, December 31st

To give you a hint at how well my New Year's Eve is going, right now I'm writing from underneath the covers. I got sent to bed about an hour ago, so I won't even get to see the ball drop in Times Square.

It's all because I was trying to have some fun with Manny. Every time I try to be nice and play with him, it backfires on me.

Earlier on, me and Manny were horsing around in the basement while Mom and Dad were upstairs getting dinner ready.

I found a little black ball of thread on the carpet, and I told Manny it was a spider. Then I pinned him down and held it over him like I was going to make him eat it. Manny was trying to wriggle free and he was screaming, but it was laugh-screaming.

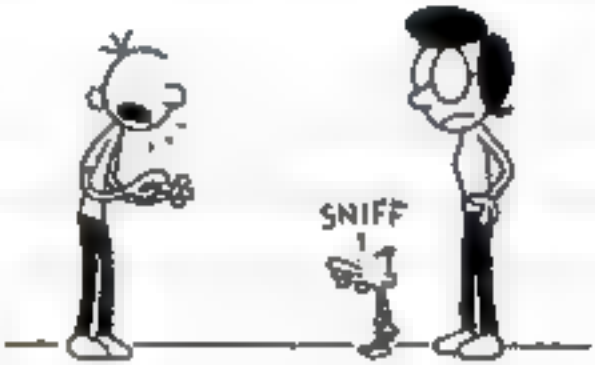
Right when I was about to let Manny go, he slapped my hand and made me drop the thread, which fell right into his mouth. And wouldn't you know it? That fool swallowed it.

Well, Manny just about had a heart attack. After about five seconds of shock, he completely lost it. He started shrieking and crying so loud I thought he was going to snap his vocal chords.

I tried to shush him, but it was impossible to keep him under control. He broke free and ran upstairs to where Mom was, and I knew I was doomed.

Manny started blubbering to Mom that I made him eat a spider, and Mom looked madder than I've ever seen her.

So I explained that it wasn't a spider that I made Manny swallow, it was just a tiny ball of thread. But that didn't seem to make Mom any less mad.



Mom brought Manny over to the kitchen table and took out a plate. Then she put a seed, a raisin and a grape on the plate and told Manny to point to the thing that was the closest in size to the piece of thread he swallowed.

I tried to tell Mom that the ball of thread wasn't even the size of the seed, but she didn't want to hear it.

Manny just stood there looking at the three things on the plate for what must have been a minute. Then he climbed down off the kitchen chair, opened up the refrigerator, and held up an orange for Mom to see.

So anyway, now you know how I ended up in the situation I'm in now.

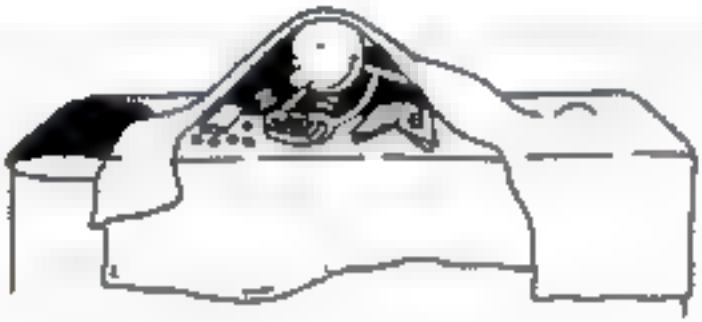
I know Mom doesn't really think Manny swallowed a ball of thread the size of an orange, or she'd be at the emergency room with him right now, and not downstairs watching t.v. But that didn't stop her from sending me to bed before it was even dark out.

Anyway, I've been doing a lot of thinking over the past couple of hours. You know how you're supposed to come up with resolutions so you can be a better person? Well, I've been looking over my journals, and I have to say, I can't really find any area I need to improve.

Actually, I take that back. If there was ONE thing I could change about myself, it would be that I would have a little more self-discipline.

Yesterday, I decided to go out and buy the Gamers' Guide to Twisted Wizard Black, but I was about a buck short. So I dug up the time capsule in Rowley's yard and got out the Mom Bucks so I could cash them in.

I probably should have left Rowley's comic books and video games in the time capsule, but I'm not going to dump on myself too much. Because if I had left them in there, I wouldn't have anything to do for the rest of New Years' Eve.

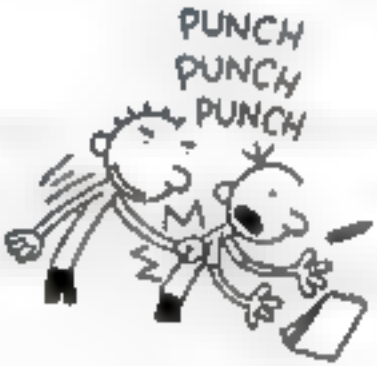


Saturday, January 1st

Well, I didn't make any New Year's resolutions, and I'm glad I didn't. I decided it's not ME who needs to improve, it's everyone else. So I'm keeping an eye on everyone in the family so I can give them helpful tips when I catch them messing up.

For example, I caught Mom breaking her resolution less than 12 hours into the New Year. But she didn't want to hear about it from me.

I also came up with a new rule for people who do things that annoy me. It's called "Three Strikes and You're Out." I made up a chart to keep track of everyone's wrongdoings, but Rodrick caught wind of my plan and used up all three of his strikes before I even finished writing his name.



It was kind of frustrating because I hadn't even had a chance to decide on what "You're Out" meant yet. So I figured I'll just give him the silent treatment until I can think of a better punishment.

I'm sure Rodrick would have reached his three strikes by the end of the day, anyway.

We went to Grampa's for brunch, like we do every New Year's Day. Grampa made the meal, and he made the only thing he knows how to make, which is watercrest salad. Watercrest salad is basically just a bunch of cold green beans and cucumber slices in a pool of vinegar. Rodrick knows I hate Grampa's watercrest salad worse than ANYTHING, but when the bowl made its way to Rodrick's hands, he made sure to pile it on my plate.

I was kicking Rodrick under the table to make him stop, but he kept right on dishing it out. When he was finally done, there was enough food on my plate for four grown men. And I knew I was going to have to eat it, too, because if I didn't, Mom would be all over my case.

I don't know why Grampa has to serve us such disgusting food. It's not like he doesn't have other options. In the retirement complex where Grampa lives, there are something like 20 women to every one man, and the women on his floor are always bringing him casseroles and stuff like that to try to win him over.

When we came over I saw at least four different casseroles in his refrigerator, and I was just praying we were going to be eating one of those instead of his awful watercrest salad.

Don't get me wrong: I'm no fan of casseroles, but I would rather eat dog food than what I had on my plate today.

But I sat there for 45 minutes and choked down every last bite. And it was no easy thing, either, because for me, watercrest salad is like kryptonite.

And guess what my reward was for cleaning my plate?

Grampa gave me the rest of the watercrest salad because he said he could see how much I liked it.

Ever since we got home, I've been lying down in bed with a bad case of cold chills.

All I can say is, this year is really shaping up to be pretty lousy so far.

Sunday, January 2nd

Tomorrow school starts back up again, and to be honest with you, I'm kind of glad the break is almost over. I've been hanging out at Rowley's house, and we've pretty much run out of ways to entertain ourselves.

Plus, every time I walk up the street, I have to deal with this weird kid Fregly who lives halfway between me and Rowley. Fregly is always hanging out in his front yard, and every time I pass by, he tries to strike up a conversation.

Sometimes the things Fregly says to me really give me the creeps. During the regular school year, I don't have to deal with Fregly, because he's usually indoors. But his mom lets him out during school vacations. And for the past couple of days, the stress of having to deal with Fregly has kept me from going up to Rowley's at all.

I've known Fregly ever since kindergarten, and he was a pretty weird kid back then, too. He kind of had his own made-up language. Like whenever he needed to use the bathroom, he would say:

Us kids figured out Fregly's language after a while, but I don't think the teacher ever totally caught on.

Fregly's mom took him out of school in the first grade to start teaching him at home. I've heard Fregly's a really smart kid, but anyone who sits out in their front yard and packs dirt in their ears can't be all that sharp.

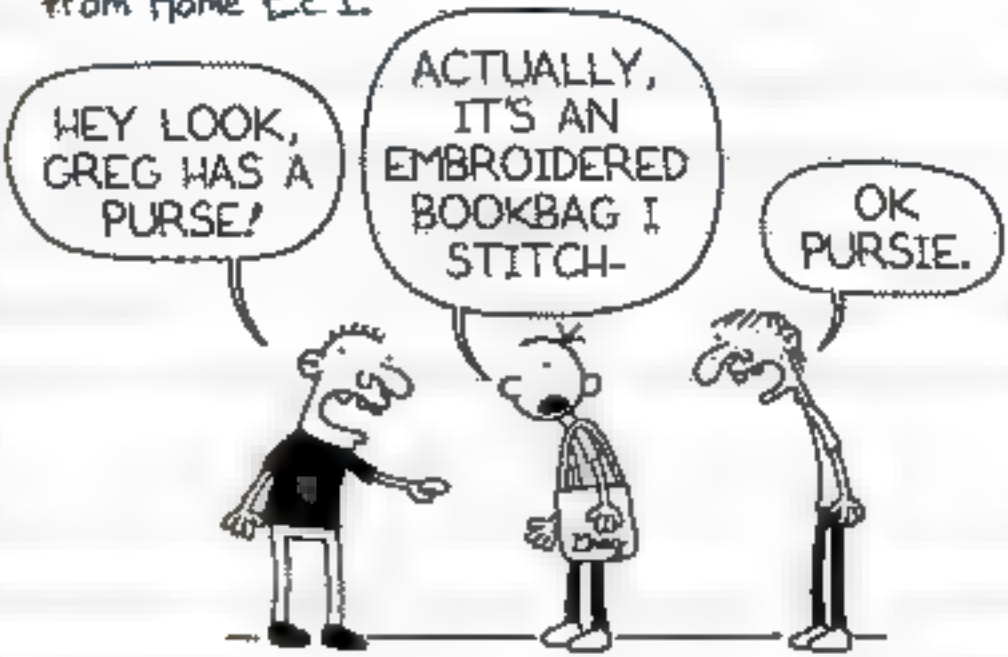
Monday, January 3rd

Today was our first day back to school. On my way up to the bus stop this morning, I ran into Fregly again, which took me by surprise.

Somebody needs to get the word out to Fregly's mom that now that school's back in session, Fregly needs to be kept indoors.

Anyway, I just hurried on by and tried not to make eye contact.

I signed up for this new class called "Independent Study" this quarter, which I didn't really want to take. I had really wanted to take Home Ec 2, but I'm still trying to live down one of my projects from Home Ec 1.



This Independent Study class is a new experiment they're trying out for the first time ever. The basic idea is that they give a group of kids a project, and there's no teacher to moderate.

The catch is that everyone in the class gets the same grade, depending on how the project goes. And I just found out today that there are a couple of kids from Mrs. Bunn's class in my Independent Study group, which could be a problem.

One kid from Mrs. Bunn's class rides my bus, and his name is Ralph Radner. He found a hockey puck on the sidewalk today, and he spent about an hour trying to open it. All I can say is, if Ralph is in my Independent Study group, our project is doomed.

Tuesday, January 4th

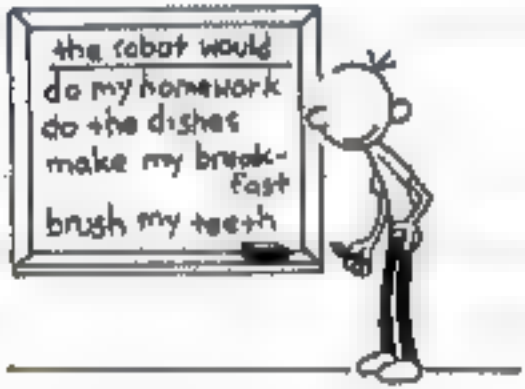
Our Independent Study class started today. Luckily, Ralph Radner wasn't in our class, but Ricky Fisher was. Ricky's big claim to fame is that he'll pick the gum off of the bottom of a desk and chew it if you pay him 50 cents. So I don't really have high hopes for our final grade.

Anyway, Independent Study started off with the teacher, Mr. Lowry, telling us what our project was: We have to create a robot.

Everybody pretty much freaked out, because we thought we were going to have to build it from scratch.

But then Mr. Lowry told us we didn't have to actually BUILD the robot, we just needed to come up with concepts for what a futuristic robot might look like and what it would do. He said our grade would be based on how good our ideas were. Then he left the room, and we were on our own.

We started brainstorming right away. I wrote a bunch of ideas down on the white board.

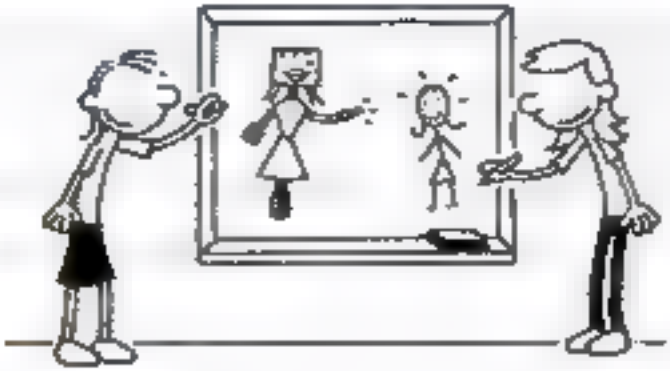


People thought my ideas were great. But the truth is, I wrote those ideas down a couple weeks ago.

I was thinking about what I would do if I won the lottery, and I decided I would hire a servant to do all the things I'm too lazy to do myself. So that's where that list came from.

But a couple of girls got up to the front of the room, and they had ideas of their own. So they erased my list and drew up their own plan.

They wanted the robot to be a girl robot (of course), and they said it could give you dating advice and it would have different flavors of lip gloss for its fingers.



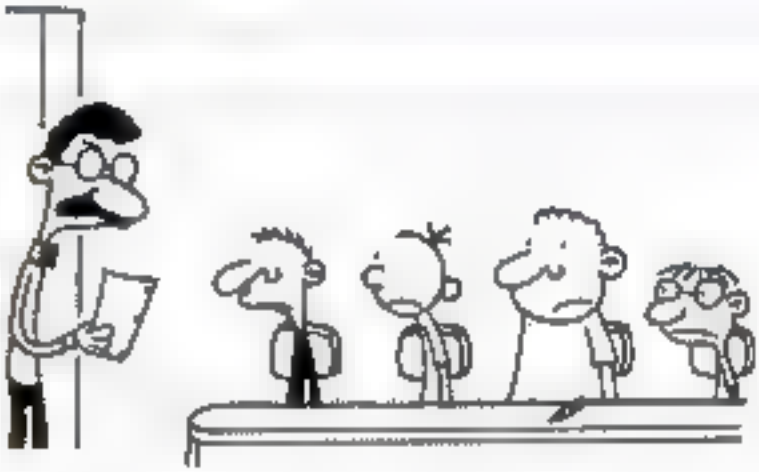
All us guys thought it was the worst idea we ever heard. So we decided to split into two different groups, girls and boys. The boys went to the other side of the room and got to work while the girls stood around gossiping.

Now that we had all the serious workers in one place, we got to work. I came up with a new idea, and it was that the robot would have a keyboard on him, and you could type in your name so the robot could say your name back to you.

Everyone was pretty hot on that idea. But then someone pointed out that you shouldn't be able to type in bad words, because you wouldn't want the robot to be able to curse. So we decided we should come up with a whole list of bad words that we should block the robot from being able to say.

We came up with all of the regular bad words, but then Ricky Fisher came up with about 20 more that I've never even heard before. So now I feel a little bad about doubting that he could contribute to the project.

In the last couple of minutes of class, Mr. Lowry came back in the room to check up on our progress. He took a look at our list, and to make a long story short, Independent Study has been cancelled for the year.

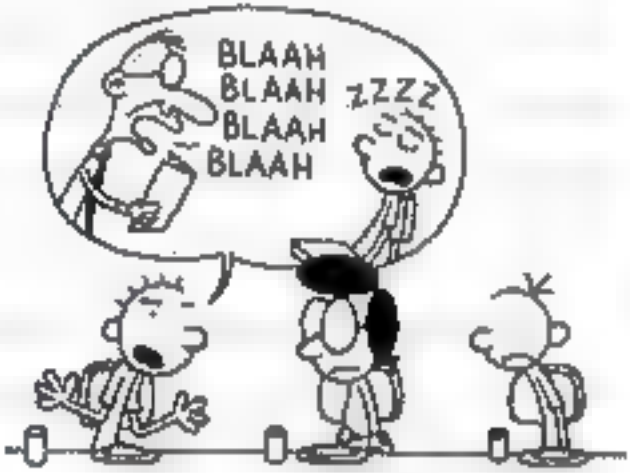


Later on, the girls complained, and they're going to be allowed to keep doing Independent Study. So if the robots in the future have cherry lip gloss for fingers, at least you'll know how it all got started.

Wednesday, January 5th

I found out some pretty bad news today. All us boys who got kicked out of Independent Study got split up into different classes for third period. So starting tomorrow, I have Mr. Peters for Botany.

I've never had Mr. Peters before, but Rodrick had him when he went to my school. I remember Rodrick used to get in trouble for falling asleep in Mr. Peters' class. Mom was really mad about it and said Rodrick was falling asleep in school because he was staying up too late at night. But Rodrick said Mr. Peters talks so slow that he couldn't stop himself from zonking out.



Believe it or not, Dad actually came to Rodrick's defense. Dad said that back when HE was in middle school, Mr. Peters was HIS Botany teacher. And Dad said Mr. Peters put everyone back to sleep back then, too. So I guess Mr. Peters has been around for about a hundred years.

Speaking of Dad, he gave me some more bad news after dinner tonight. Dad said that tomorrow night is the start of winter swim team.

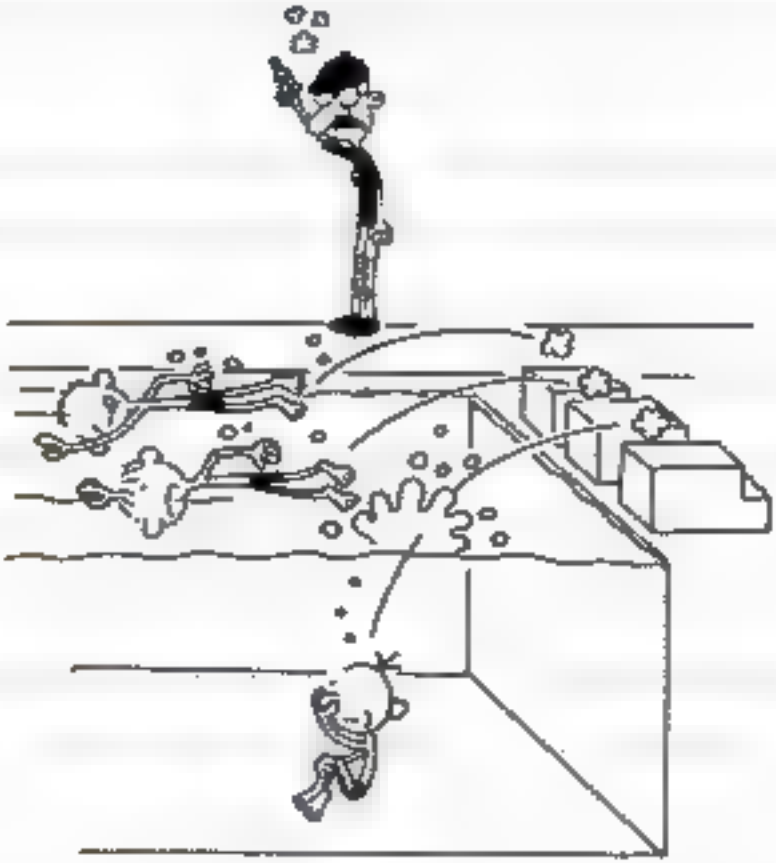
I thought he was joking at first. Swim team is the worst part about the summer, and the only reason I look forward to going back to school is because it means no more morning swim practices.

But Dad said our swim coach decided to start holding winter practices to keep everyone in "tip-top shape."

Dad tried to get me excited by saying that we'll be practicing in a heated pool. But if I wanted warm water, I'd take a bath.

Dad has been pushing this swim team thing ever since I was young. I guess he's always hoping I am going to blossom into this great athlete, but I guess you could say I've just never really had all that much drive.

I remember my first swim meet. I didn't understand the whole concept of a starting pistol and how it only fired blanks. So in my first race, I was a whole lot more concerned about where the bullet was going to land than I was about getting to the other end of the pool.



What's really ironic is that at the end of that first summer, I won "Most Improved" at the awards banquet. The way they figure out who wins Most Improved is by comparing your finishing time in your first meet against your finishing time in your last meet. I guess nobody remembered that I held my breath for a minute and a half before even coming up for air.

So I guess that's where Dad got his idea that I'm destined for great things as a swimmer.

Thursday, January 6th

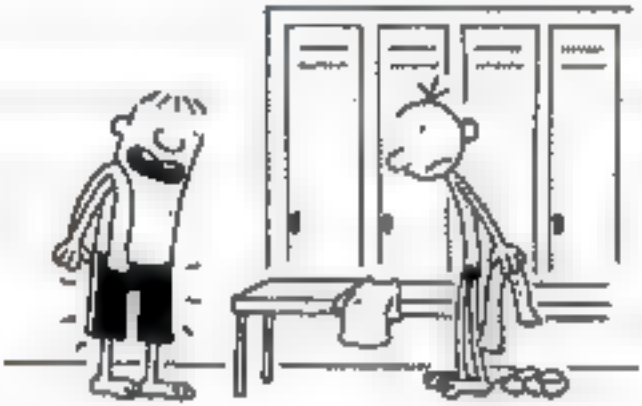
Man, I did NOT want to go to swim practice tonight. I tried everything I could think of to get out of going. I even tried to buy my way out with the stack of Mom Bucks I have left.

But Mom said she thought a winter sport would be good for me and that I could "make new friends."

What she doesn't get is the fact that half the guys on the swim team were also on my soccer team, so I'm sure they'll be lining up to take turns dunking me.

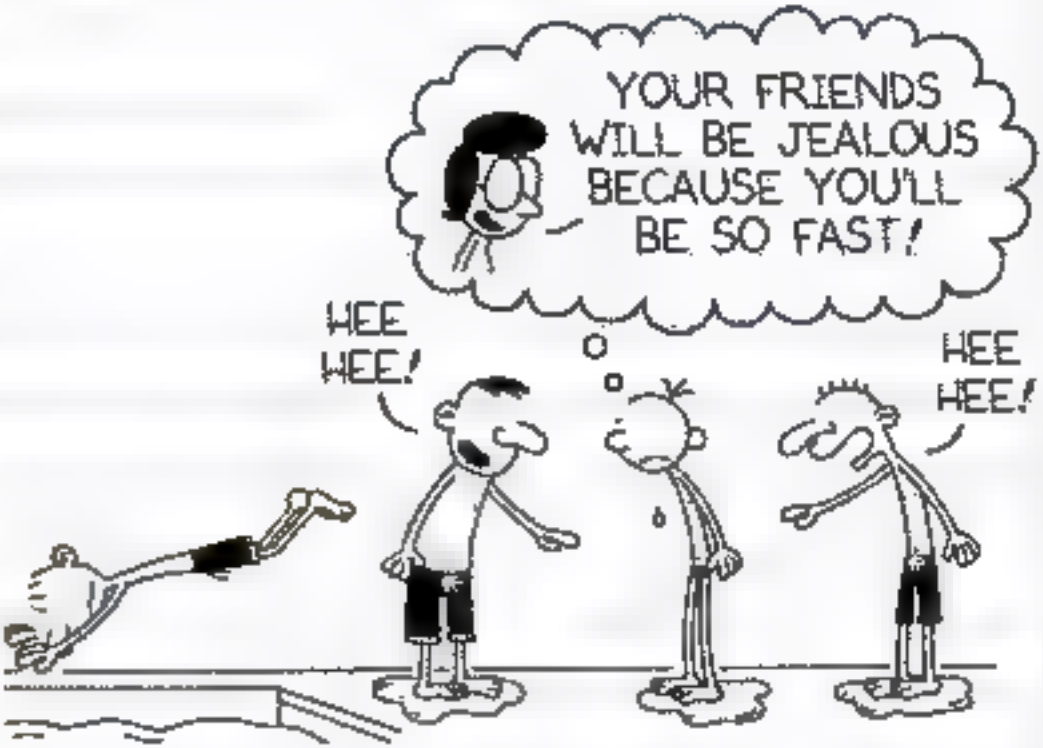
Anyway, no amount of begging could get me out of swim practice, so off we went after dinner. Dad drove me, and we picked up Rowley on the way. Believe it or not, he was actually EXCITED to be going.

In the locker room, we got into our bathing suits. Rowley had a cool brand-new suit that went down to his knees, and I was stuck with a "racing style" one, which is just code for "bikini."



I TOLD Mom that the type of bathing suit she gave me isn't in style anymore. She said if it was good enough for Rodrick, it was good enough for me. So now I have the added knowledge that I am wearing Rodrick's hand-me-down bathing suit.

This bathing suit thing is just one example of how sometimes, Mom is completely out of touch.



Another serious drawback of my bathing suit is that it doesn't have a string you can tie like everyone else's does.

So I figure it's just a matter of time before I get pantsed by one of the morons from my soccer team.

Friday, January 7th

Today I had my first Botany class with Mr. Peters, and I got to experience firsthand what Rodrick was talking about.

Mr. Peters talks so slow and so quiet that I felt like I swallowed a whole handful of sleeping pills. I did my best to stay awake, but at this one point I nodded off for a second. I jerked awake and my hand snapped back and I made some ridiculous sound.

Part of my problem in trying to keep awake was last night's swim practice. I got home around 10 and didn't finish my homework until something like midnight.

We had swim practice tonight, too. But half of the pool was reserved for a "Jazzercize" class, so the entire swim team got crammed into two lanes.

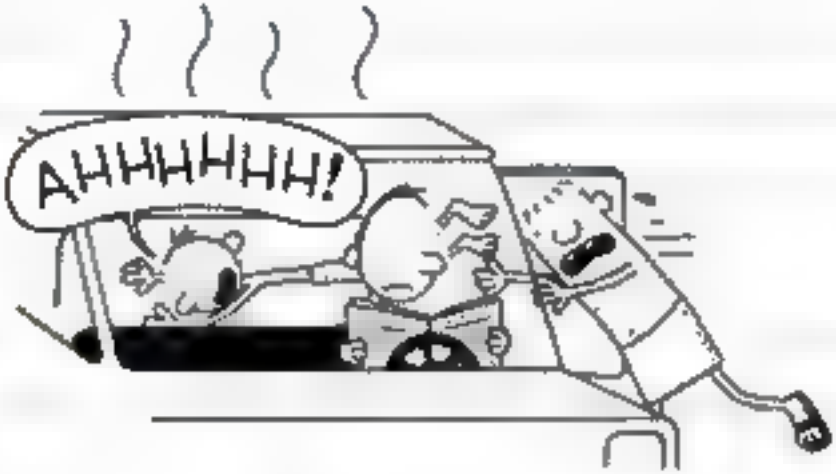
It was a traffic nightmare. I'm the slowest kid on the team, so every three seconds I had someone tapping my feet or pulling at my legs to tell me to get out of the way and let them get past me. It didn't help that I forgot my nose clip and had to swim with one hand the entire time.

I'm wondering if I could get Dad to agree to let me do Jazzercize from now on and have that count as my swim paractice. But something is telling me not to ask him that question.

At the end of swim practice, everyone takes a hot shower before getting back into their street clothes, but not me. After spending my whole school day AND my evening with these guys, I seriously do not need to stand around in an open shower with everyone and shoot the breeze.

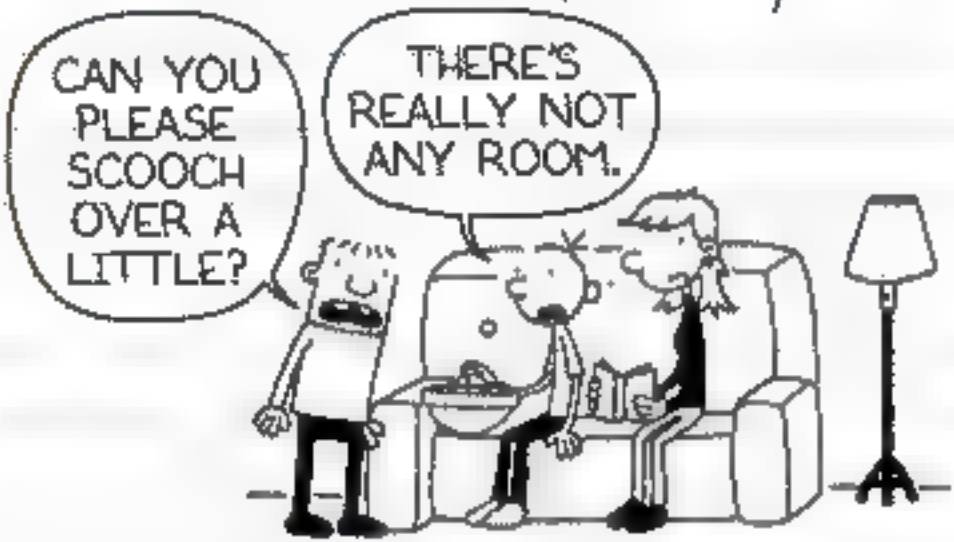
So as soon as practice ends, me and Rowley make a beeline for the car. Dad parks right next to the extrance, so it's only like five steps from the building to the car.

It's so cold out that you can feel ice forming on your skin in those two seconds when you're actually outside. But I swear, if there's one thing that makes swim practice tolerable, it's making that dive into a toasty car and heading home.



Saturday, January 8th

Tonight, Rowley's parents went out to dinner, so they got Rowley a babysitter. I personally think that it's pretty weird that a boy in the seventh grade can't just watch himself for three hours, but I'm guess it's none of my business. Besides, it' works out real good for me. Because Rowley's babysitter is Lori Matthews, who just so happens to be the prettiest of all the Matthews sisters. I'm technically not allowed to be over at Rowley's when he has a babysitter, but I always try to make sure I at least show up for "story time."

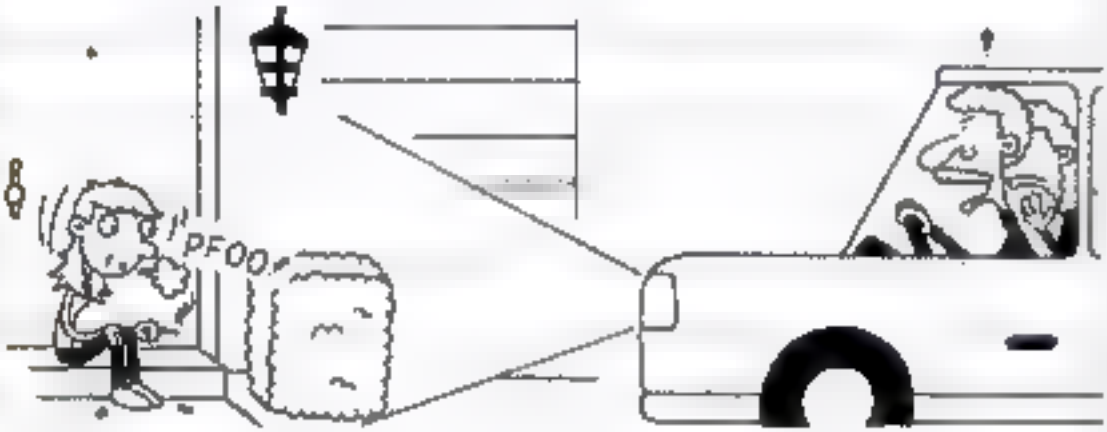


Plus, I figure if I can get in good with Lori Matthews, I have a better shot at dating her younger sister, Jennifer.

Tonight, after I was sure Rowley's parents were gone, I headed up to his house. On my way up the hill, I was rehearsing a bunch of jokes I planned to use to score points with Lori. So imagine my surprise when I knocked on the door and the person who answered it was not Lori Matthews or Rowley, but Leland, Rowley's next-door neighbor.

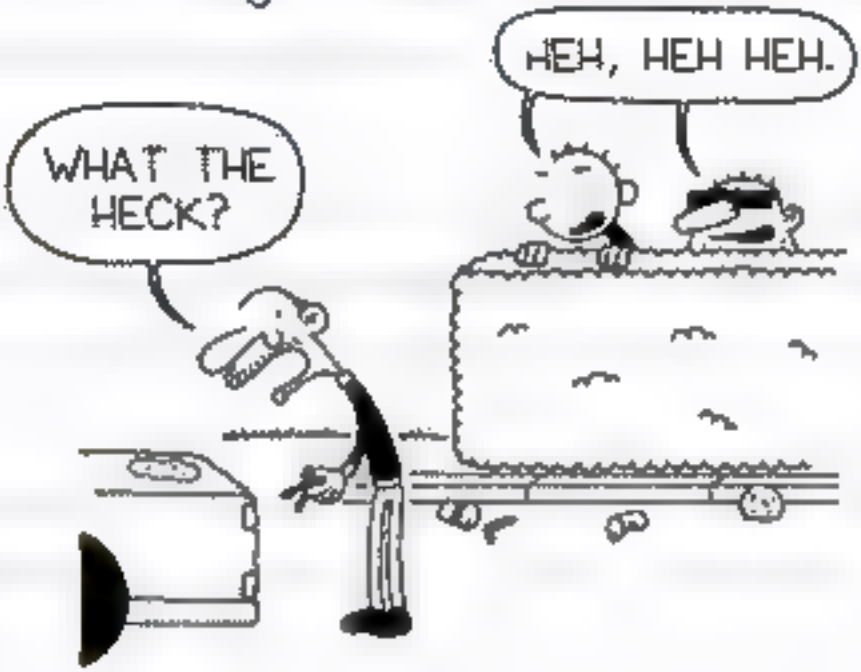
Leland is a nice guy and all, but he's no substitute for Lori Matthews. And I can pretty much guarantee that anyone who was expecting to see Lori at the front door and got Leland instead would have had the same reaction as me.

Anyway, it turns out Rowley's parents fired Lori as the babysitter and hired Leland to take her place. Rowley's parents made him promise not to tell anybody why they fired Lori, because they didn't want to "tarnish her reputation." But Rowley finally told me after I swore up and down I'd never say a word to anybody about it, and so I won't.



So now that Lori was out of the picture, we had to find a way to entertain ourselves. Leland suggested we play "Dungeons and Dragons" (which is this game where you roll dice and have these adventures and stuff) and since we didn't have any other options, we said OK. At first I thought it was a lame game because it didn't involve computers and you just had to use your "imagination," but it turned out to be pretty fun. Because in Dungeons and Dragons, you can do all sorts of things you could never get away with in real life.

When I got home I told Mom all about Dungeons and Dragons and how Leland was a really good Dungeon Master. Rodrick overheard me talking about Leland and Rodrick told me Leland is the biggest nerd in his school. But this is coming from a guy who just spent his Saturday night putting fake vomit on people's cars at the Stop and Shop, so I think I'll just take his opinion with a grain of salt.



A new entry of Diary of a Wimpy Kid will appear on Tuesday. A quick question for you in the mean time:

If Diary of a Wimpy Kid was published as a "real" book, do you think you'd buy it?

YES NO

Sunday, January 9th

HUGE shocker today. We got a dog!

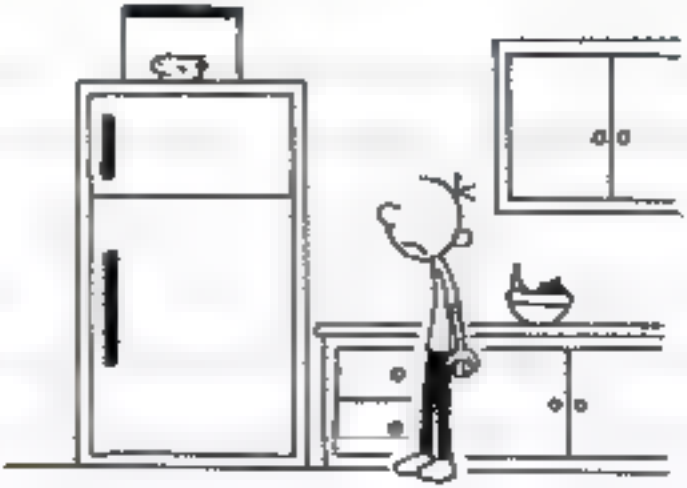
Dad just decided to go out to the mall and buy us a dog as a surprise. He didn't tell anyone he was going to do it, not even Mom. And I don't think Mom was too thrilled, because she doesn't even let Dad buy a new pair of pants for himself without checking with her first.

I've been wanting a dog for a LONG time, but I never thought it would happen.

Uncle Joe has this dog named Killer that's as big as a bear. A couple years ago I made the mistake of asking Uncle Joe to work on Dad and try to convince him to buy us a dog, but it had the opposite effect.

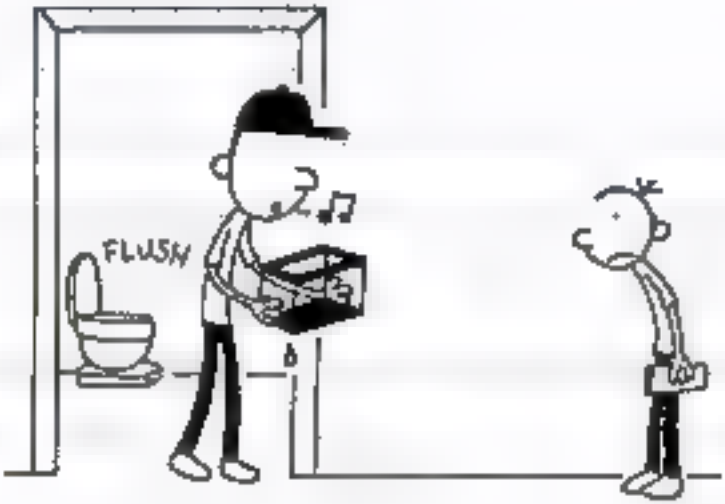
I think one of the reasons Dad got us a dog is because Rodrick's fish finally died yesterday. I was starting to wonder if that fish was going to live forever.

After Rodrick's fish ate mine back in November, Mom put the aquarium on top of the refrigerator. I don't think anyone has fed that fish even once in two months, so he must have been surviving on the algae that was growing at the bottom of his tank. And believe it or not, he was getting fatter.



Dad said that Rodrick's fish died of "natural causes," but I kind of doubt that.

Because about ten minutes before Dad told everyone Rodrick's fish had "passed on," I had seen him alive and breathing at the bottom of the tank.



Even if Dad is guilty of some foul play, I'm happy that we got a dog out of it.

At dinner, Dad said we needed to come up with a name for our new pet. So everyone was coming up with different ideas.

I wanted to name the dog Toirock or Hammerfist after my Dungeons and Dragons characters, but nobody liked my ideas.

But Manny's ideas were a whole lot dumber. He wanted to name the dog after what we were having for dinner, like "Spinach" and "Macaroni" and stuff like that.

Believe it or not, Mom and Dad were encouraging him. Then Manny started rattling off every animal he knew, like "Elephant" and "Lizard" and "Eagle."

I tried to get Rodrick to join me in saying how dumb these names were, but Rodrick liked Manny's idea to name the dog "Turtle."

After that, we started getting into a pretty heated debate about the names, so Mom put an end to it.

She said if the three of us boys couldn't agree on a name, then she was going to "break the tie" and name the dog herself.

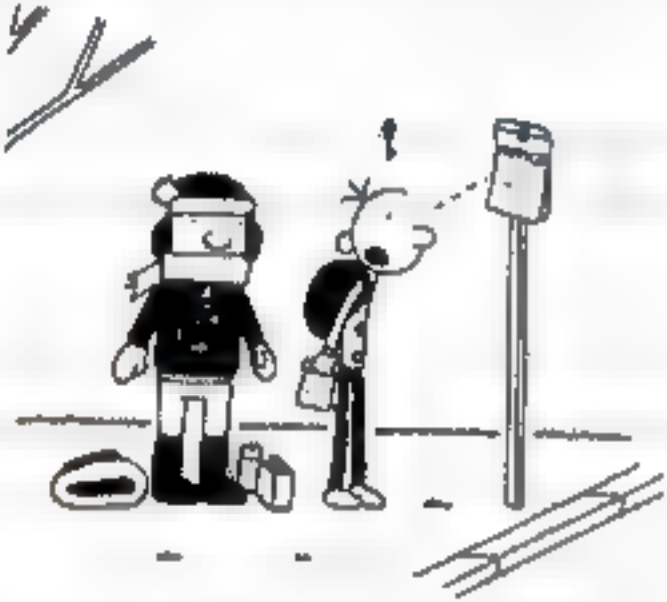
So here is the name that Mom came up with: "Sweetie Pie." I thought she was joking, because the dog is a boy, not a girl. But she was serious.

And Dad agreed to the name, so that was that. I think Dad was just relieved Mom wasn't still mad at him, so he was willing to go with anything she said at that point.

All I can say is, something tells me Uncle Joe would not approve.

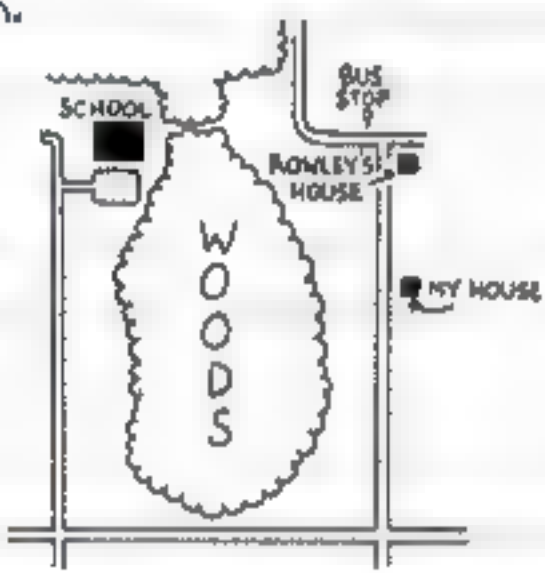
Monday, January 10th

Well, yesterday I got a good surprise, but today I got a real nasty one. When me and Rowley showed up at the bus stop today, there was this sign posted that said there had been a "rezoning." The bottom line was that starting today, kids on my street were going to have to WALK to school.



I don't know what they were thinking when they did this rezoning thing. It's like a 45 minute walk from my street to the school.

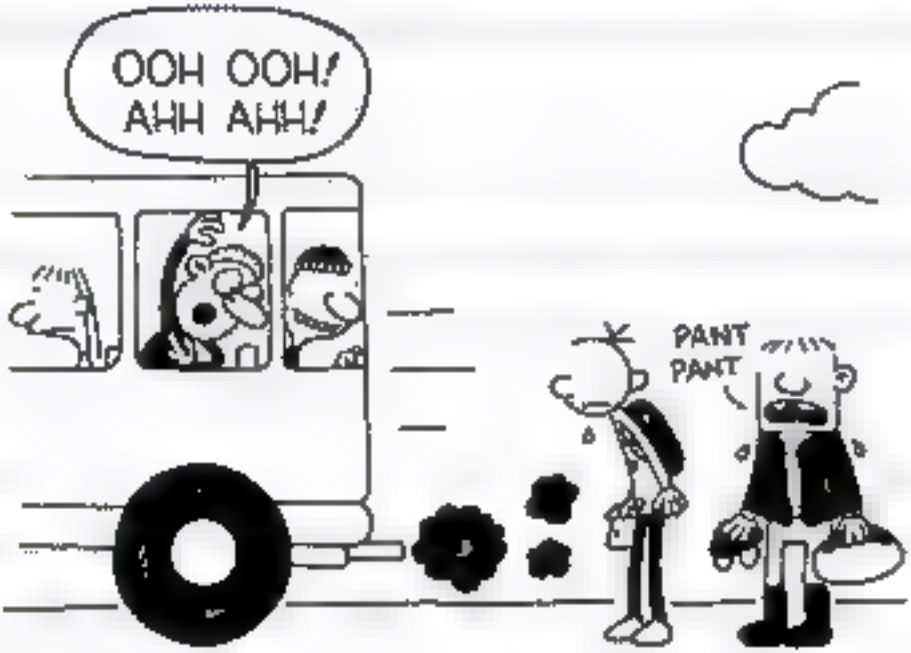
I'm sure when they did it they were thinking kids in my neighborhood could just cut through the path in the woods between our street and the school. But those woods are the territory of Nasty Pants and his thugs, so that's totally out of the question.



The only way me and Rowley could get to school was by walking all the way around the woods, and that's something like two miles.

But we didn't have any choice. We had to run the whole way just to make it to school on time. And the only reason we made it at all is because it's practically all downhill between our street and school.

When we got close to the school, our regular bus passed us, and one of the kids riding in the back was Cecil Warner. He stuck his head out the window and started making monkey noises at us.

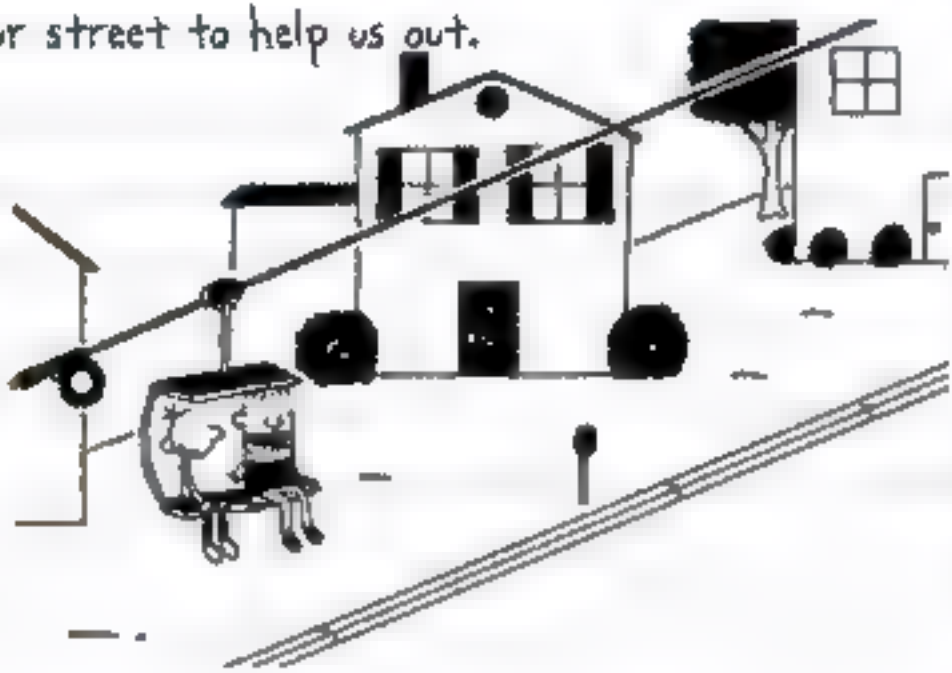


It really stunk, for two reasons. For one, Cecil only lives about 200 yards away from the school, so don't ask me what the rezoning people were thinking. And for two, Cecil got the monkey noises idea from us, because we would pull that on him every morning when we rode by HIM walking to school.

By the time I got to school, I was totally wiped out, which made staying awake in Mr. Peters' class even harder than usual. Lately, Mr. Peters has been standing about two feet in front of me while he teaches class. You would think that would help me stay awake, but he's like one of those snakes in a cartoon that can hypnotize its prey.

The only way I could stay awake was by pinching my inner thigh underneath the desk. And now I'm totally sore, so don't ask me what I'm going to do tomorrow.

On the way home from school, I found out the worst part of this rezoning thing: the walk home is almost all UPHILL. By the time I got home, I was practically dead from exhaustion. But Rowley's parents have got money, so I'm just hoping we can convince them to fund a ski lift on our street to help us out.



Another way to get around this problem is to ask Dad to drive me to school every morning. When I pitched the idea to Mom tonight, she said maybe I could earn rides to school by paying for them in Mom Bucks. The problem is, I'm almost all out.

So Mom said if I took Sweetie outside to go to the bathroom after school every day, she'd give me enough Mom Bucks to cover the ride.

Rodrick complained that he wasn't getting a chance to cash in on the dog, so Mom came up with an idea for him to make a little money. She sent him off to the mall to have a dog bowl made up with Sweetie's name on it. But Rodrick's bad spelling hurt him again, because when he got back with the bowl, Mom refused to pay him.

Tuesday, January 11th

Mr. Peters' class was a disaster today. I was so tired I actually started hallucinating. I'm not sure, but the two cups of coffee I drank at home to help me stay awake may have had something to do with it.

I've really got to do something about this situation. Mr. Peters is always singling me out in class and asking me questions, and of course I never know the answers. So I think I'm headed for big trouble.

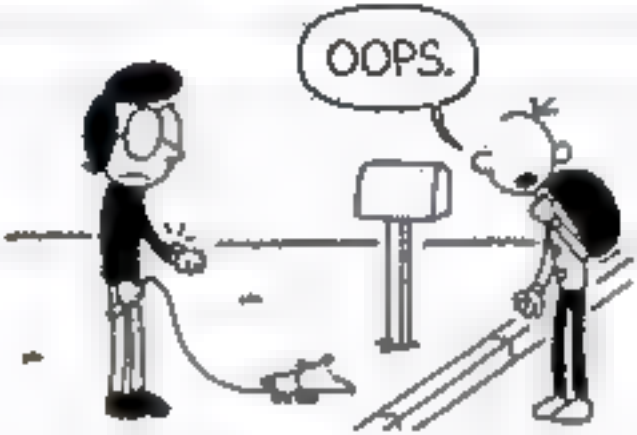
On my walk home from school this afternoon, I was so tired I thought I was going to fall asleep right on the sidewalk. So when I got to Collin's house, I decided to stop and take a nap to recharge my batteries.

But Collin didn't get the fact that I was trying to catch some sleep, and he woke me up every two minutes to try to get me to play with him. The fourth or fifth time he woke me up, I was going to give him a good pop. But something about the game he was holding looked awfully familiar.

When Collin opened up the game, I knew why it looked so familiar. The play money inside of it was the EXACT same kind of money Mom has been using as Mom Bucks! And you have never seen someone move as quickly as I did right then.

When I counted it all up, I realized there was something like two million dollars in cash sitting in that board game. But I didn't say anything to Collin. I just kept my mouth shut and played the game. But when Collin got up for a bathroom break, I saw my opening.

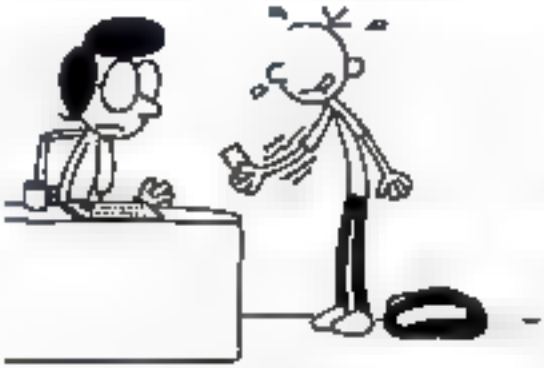
The timing of finding that board game couldn't have been better. Like I said before, I was almost out of Mom Bucks, and my only source of future money was going to be from taking Sweetie out when I got home from school. But I lost that job by dropping the ball on my very first day.



Wednesday, January 12th

This morning I took a deep breath and tried out my new Mom Bucks. I gave Mom 100 dollars of the play money I took from Collin's house and asked Mom for a ride in to school.

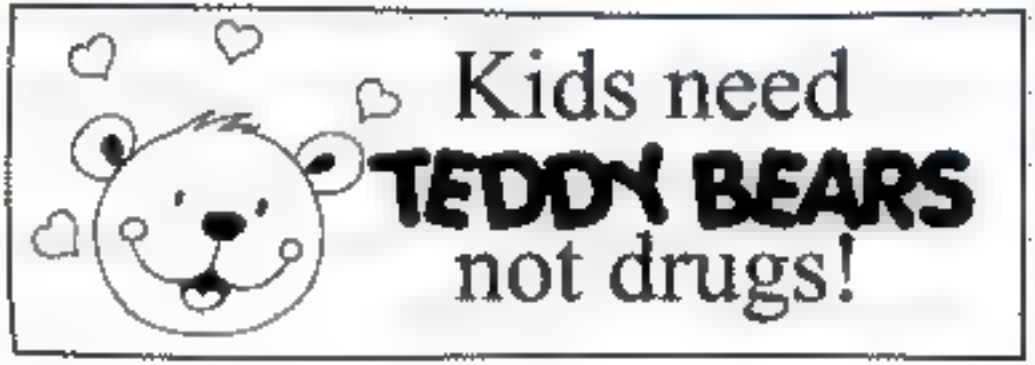
I thought for sure I was going to get busted. I figured Mom had some kind of invisible ink or something on the offical Mom Bucks and that she'd know the ones I was handing her were counterfeit, but she took them without even blinking.



I couldn't believe I got that past her. I don't think I've ever gotten anything past Mom in my whole life.

This is HUGE. I have about 2 million dollars in fake Mom Bucks stashed underneath my mattress. If I can keep using that money to pay for rides, I'll never have to walk anywhere again in my whole life. I'll even get rides up to Rowley's house, just because I can.

Mom asked Dad to drive me in to school, and Dad took me in Mom's car. Unfortunately, Mom's car is covered in all these embarrassing bumper stickers, so I needed to figure out a way to get dropped off without being seen by anyone.



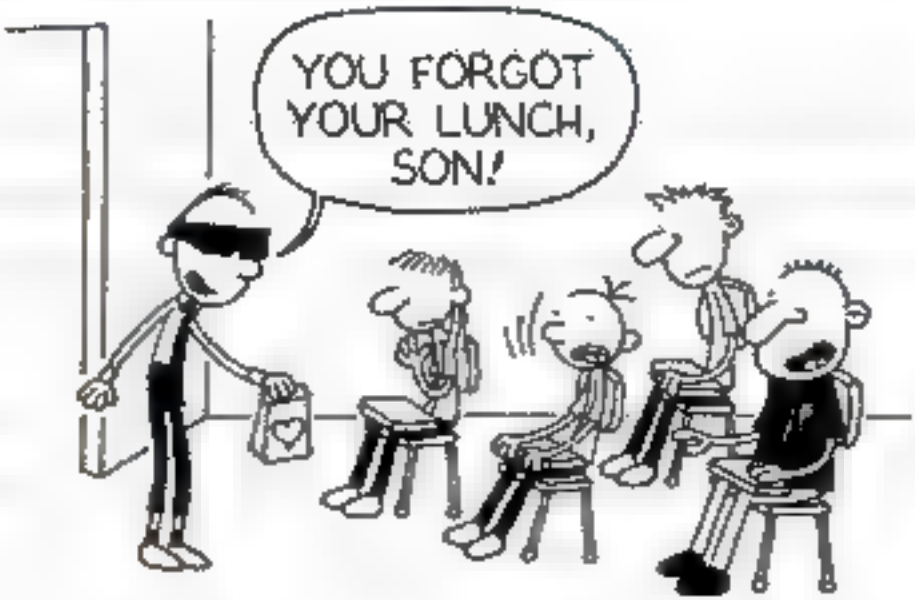
I came up with the idea to have Dad drive me around to the back of the school, instead of up front where the drop-off lane is.

I slipped in through the back door and wasn't spotted by a single soul.

And with all that energy I saved from not having to walk to school, I was able to stay awake for almost half of Mr. Peters' class.

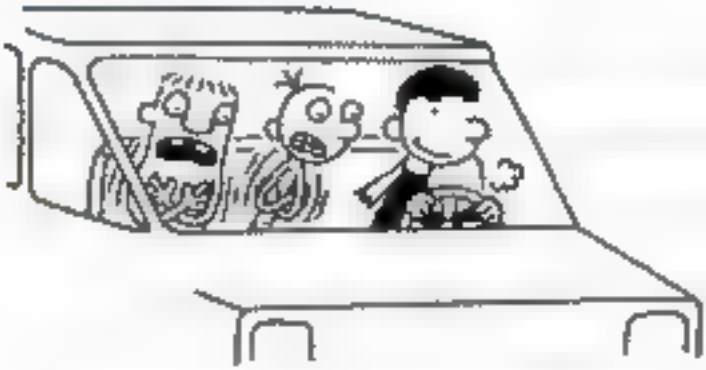
Thursday, January 13th

Dad drove me in to school again today, and just like yesterday, I had him let me out around the back. But Dad must have found out that all the other parents drop their kids off at the front of the school, and he put two and two together and realized I was too embarrassed to be seen getting dropped off. So he paid me back BIG time by coming into my homeroom with his pants hiked up to his chest wearing a pair of Grandpa's giant sunglasses that were in our car.



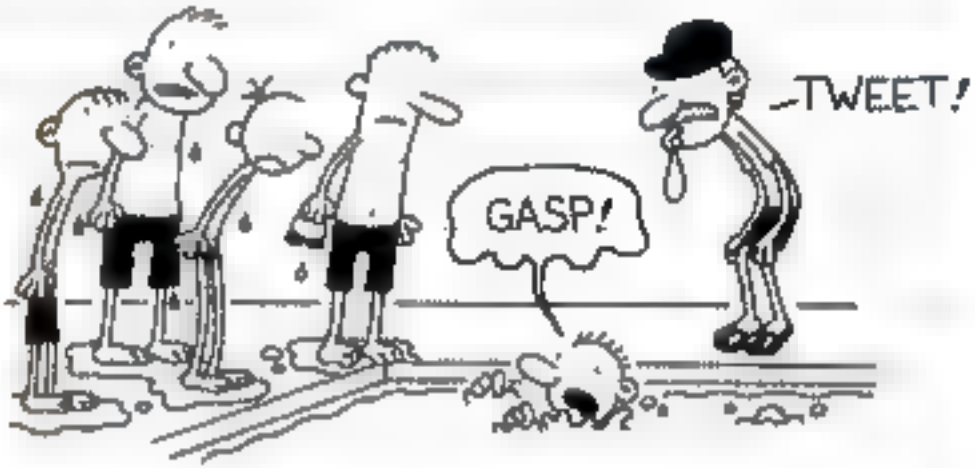
I guess I kind of deserved that. But Dad got me with a double-whammy, because he sent Rodrick to pick me up after swim practice tonight.

I was expecting to be going straight from the pool into Dad's warm car, but Rodrick was waiting for me instead in his car which has a broken heater. So me and Rowley practically froze to the seats on the ride back. And it wasn't until we got three quarters of the way home that I realized Rodrick actually had the air conditioner on.



Swim practice was bad enough without that extra insult at the end of the night.

The coach had made a deal with the team that if everyone could swim from one end of the pool to the other without taking a breath, he would let us out early. I'm the worst one on the team, so everyone's eyes were on me. But when it was my turn to go, believe it or not, I made it all the way across. But one last kid still had to go: Roger Hickey. I wasn't worried, though, because Roger is the best swimmer on the whole team. But he's also a total jerk, and so he pulled up for air with something like a foot and a half to go on purpose. So thanks to him, practice got extended another 25 minutes.

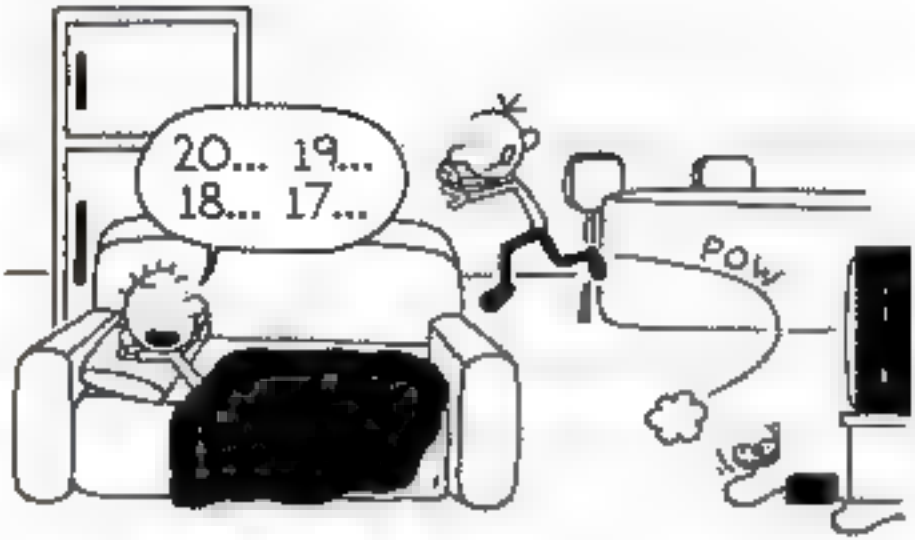


Friday, January 14th

The worst part of having to walk home from school is the final leg where I have to walk up my hill. But I figured out a solution to that problem today. I bet Rowley he couldn't carry me all the way up to my house on his back. At first he wasn't too hot on the idea, but when I offered to carry his backpack for him he caved in and took me up on my challenge. And I made sure to keep him going by giving him plenty of encouragement on the way up.

I actually have Rodrick to thank for inspiring me to come up with that idea. When I was a little kid, Rodrick would always try to make me do stuff for him that he was too lazy to do himself.

But then he'd challenge me to do what he wanted in under 20 seconds. And he always told me there was NO WAY I could do it in that time, because I was way too slow. And for some reason that always did the trick.



I was pretty happy today to find out that kind of psychology works on Rowley, too.

But I am definitely going to have to come up with some sort of reward system of snacks or cookies or something, because it was really hard to keep Rowley motivated all the way up to my house.

The piggyback rides thing backfired on me later on, anyway. Leland was coming over to Rowley's to babysit again and we had a marathon game of Dungeons and Dragons planned. But Rowley was in bed before 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, January 15th

After Rowley woke up today I got him to call Leland and ask him if we could come over and play Dungeons and Dragons, since it got cancelled last night. Leland said yes, so I got my stuff together to head up to his house.

Unfortunately Mom heard my conversation with Rowley and stopped me before I could get out the door. She thinks this whole Dungeons and Dragons thing is "weird" and doesn't understand why a high school kid like Leland would want to hang out with a couple of seventh graders on a Saturday afternoon to talk about goblins and spells and stuff like that.

I tried to explain to Mom that Leland was just really cool, and that besides, a person like her would never understand Dungeons and Dragons anyway.

Well, I wish I hadn't gone and said that. It just made Mom way more curious, and then she said she wanted to go WITH me to Leland's and watch us play.

I begged Mom not to go. I even offered her 1,000 Mom Bucks if she would stay home, but that just made her more determined to come with me. So Mom came to Leland's with me and there was nothing I could do about it.

Leland and Rowley could have cared less that Mom came along. But having Mom there completely ruined the Dungeons and Dragons experience for me, because I felt totally dorky playing in front of her.

I figured Mom would eventually get bored and just go home, but she stuck around for a long time. And right when I thought she was going to leave she said SHE wanted to join in on our adventure.

I figured Leland would make up some excuse and tell Mom she couldn't play, but he actually seemed pretty enthusiastic about the idea. I was trying to signal Leland that this was a big mistake, but he was getting Mom started on creating a character.

It got worse from there. Mom decided she wanted HER character to be MY characters' mom in the game, so she could "look after me."

I did some quick thinking and made up a lie. I told her that in Dungeons and Dragons, all the characters are orphans and so characters can't go off on adventures with their parents.

Mom seemed to believe my explanation. But then she asked Leland if she could name her character anything she wanted, and Leland said yes. So she name her character "Mom."

I have to give Mom credit for figuring out a way around my made-up rule. But it ruined the whole game for me.

Plus, even if Mom's character technically wasn't my character's mom in the game, she certainly acted like it. At this one point in the story, our characters were hanging out at a tavern waiting for a spy to arrive, and I had my dwarf Murlon order a pint of mead. Mead is sort of like beer in Dungeons and Dragons, and I guess Mom didn't approve of that.

But the worst part of the game was when we got into a battle situation.

Leland does a really good job of describing setting up a good battle, like he did when we rolled away a giant boulder blocking a cave and found a nasty surprise waiting for us.

But Mom doesn't get the whole concept about how you have to kill as many monsters as possible in this game to get experience points and move up levels.

And our characters are never going to move up any levels as long as Mom is around for the ride.

After about an hour of this, I couldn't really take anymore, so I called it quits. On the way home, Mom was really talking up Dungeons and Dragons, saying it could really help me to learn how to deal with conflicts "nonconfrontationally" and stuff like that. All I can say is, I hope she isn't planning on being a regular at these games. Because the first chance I get, "Mom" is going to get accidentally bumped off a cliff by one of my characters.

Sunday, January 16th

After church I asked Mom if she would take me over to the book store to get a Dungeons and Dragons book. But when we got there, Mom broke out her credit card and bought me just about every Dungeons and Dragons book there is. And I didn't even have to break out a single phony Mom Buck to pay for it.

Mom is so enthusiastic about Dungeons and Dragons, it's a little scary. On the way home, she was going on and on about how it "encourages reading" and how it helps develop "math skills."

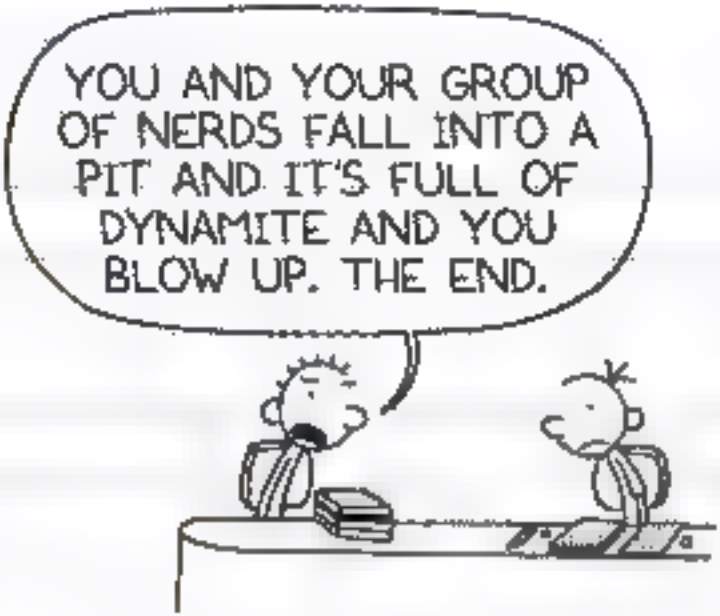
I'm actually starting to wonder if Dungeons and Dragons was secretly created by teachers or parents and is one of those educational games that tricks kids into learning. But with all of the violence in the game I sort of doubt it.

Anyway, when I got home I thanked Mom for the books and headed up to my room to start checking them out. But then I found out there was a catch, which I should have figured. Mom actually bought the books so me and Rodrick could play TOGETHER, and she marched me down to Rodrick's room to give him this news.

Mom said playing Dungeons and Dragons together could really help us learn to "problem-solve" and work out our conflicts. Then she said she wanted Rodrick to be the Dungeon Master, just like Leland. She dumped the pile of books on Rodrick's bed and told him to start studying up.

I felt stupid enough playing Dungeons and Dragons at Leland's house when Mom was in the room, but playing with Rodrick was going to be much worse. I spent about two hours in my room making all the characters, and I tried to only use names Rodrick wouldn't make fun of, like "Bob" and "Joe" and stuff like that.

Once I was finished, I went to get Rodrick. He sat down across the kitchen table from me and we started the game.



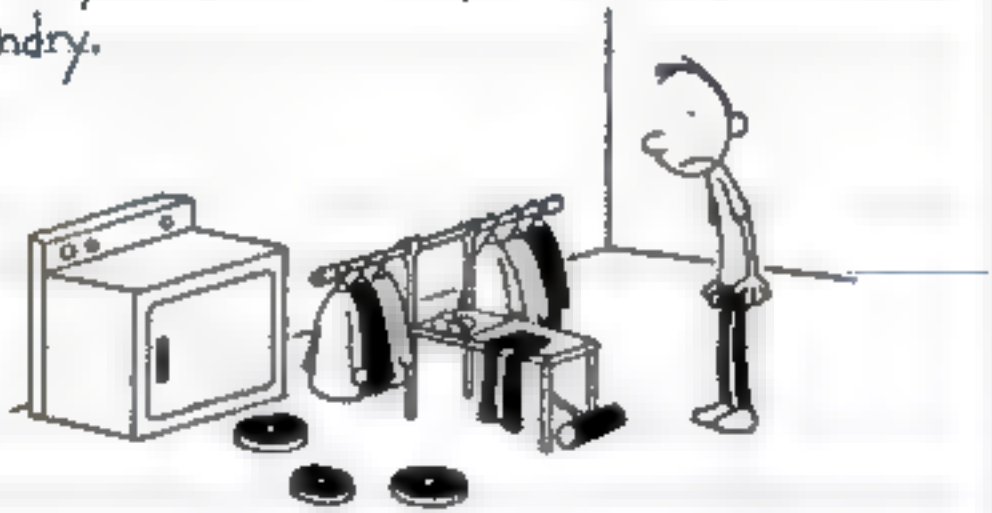
On the bright side, if you have something unpleasant in front of you, I guess it's better to just get it over with at once instead of dragging it out.

Monday, January 17th

I didn't have school today because of the holiday, so I was looking forward to having a day to do whatever I wanted. But Dad was home, too, which was bad news for me. For some reason, Dad has been all over my case lately, telling me to sit up straight and saying how I need to be more "active" and all of that. He made up a new rule last week that I have to spend at least a half an hour outside every day. But he doesn't understand that it's practically impossible to see a Game Boy screen in direct sunlight.

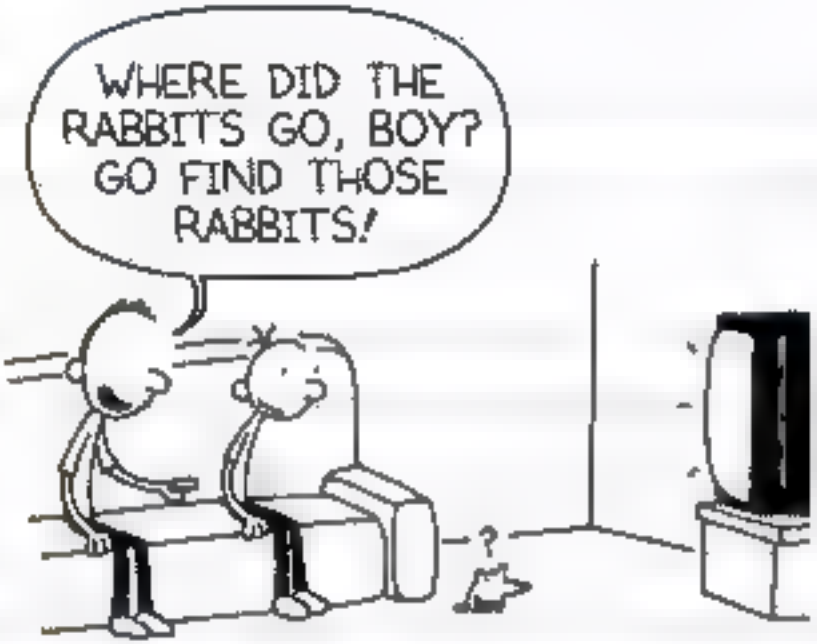
Dad has also been pushing me to start using the weight set he got me for Christmas.

I wish I could just lie and tell him I've been working out every day, but Mom totally blows my cover by using the bench press to hang the laundry.



Anyway, I was happy to get out of the house today, because the dog has been driving me crazy with his barking. It's all Dad's fault.

A few days ago, there was a t.v. commercial with rabbits in it, and Sweetie seemed really interested. So when the commercial ended, Dad got Sweetie all riled up.



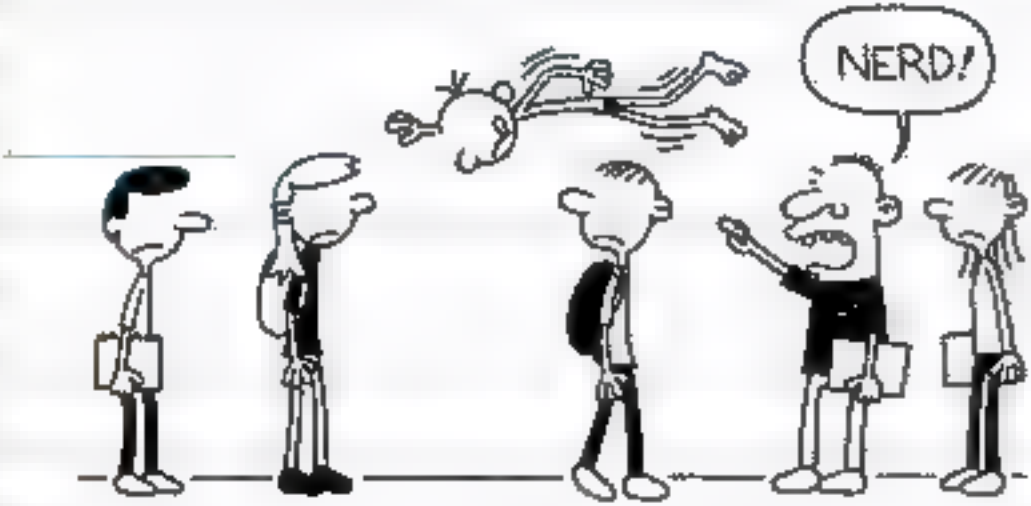
Well, Sweetie started barking at the t.v. like crazy, and we couldn't get him to stop.

Now, whenever the t.v. is on, Sweetie barks at the screen. And the only time he stops barking is when the commercial with the rabbits comes back on.

Just another reminder of why I need to get my own television for my room.

Tuesday, January 18th

There's this dream I always have where I can fly, and I had it again this morning. Only it's not really flying, it's more like swimming through the air, and I can only move at about two miles an hour. I wish if I was going to have a dream where I can fly I could at least look cool doing it.



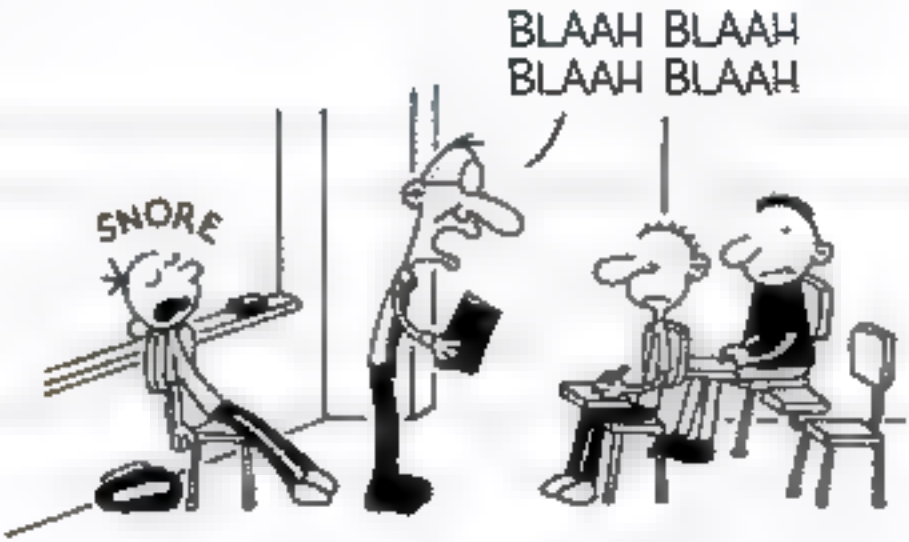
I also wish I could say I was at home in bed when I had that dream this morning but unfortunately that was not the case.

I finally fell flat-out asleep in Mr. Peters' class, which I guess was bound to happen eventually.

Mr. Peters snapped his fingers real loud to get me to wake up and he told me he was giving me detention for falling asleep during his lecture. Then he sent me to the front of the room to sit in the chair next to his desk. I was just glad I didn't have to keep sitting at my own chair, because I didn't have anything to wipe the puddle of drool off of my desk with.

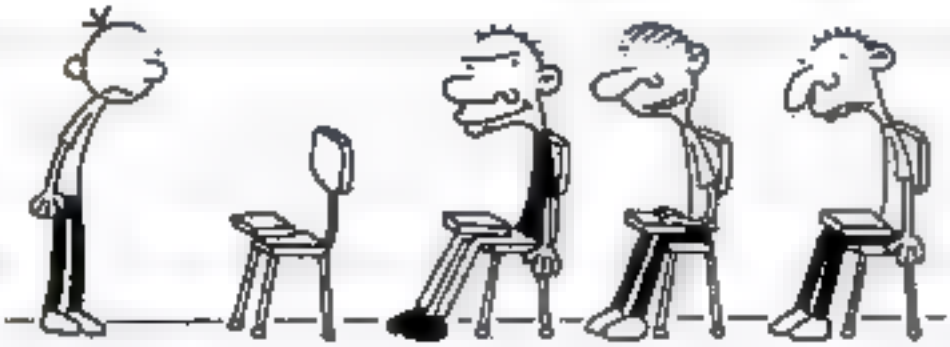
I guess Mr. Peters was trying to embarrass me by having me sit up front, but to be honest, I was pretty relieved.

Because for the first time ever in Mr. Peters' class, I was able to just sleep in peace.



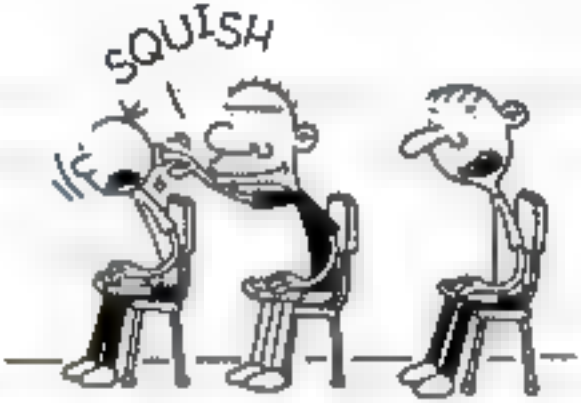
Wednesday, January 19th

Today I had to serve my detention for falling asleep in Mr. Peters' class. I've never got a detention before, so I didn't really know what to expect. My first thought when I saw the other kids in the room was that I didn't belong in here with these future criminals. The only empty seat was right in front of Kenny Keith, who really hates me.



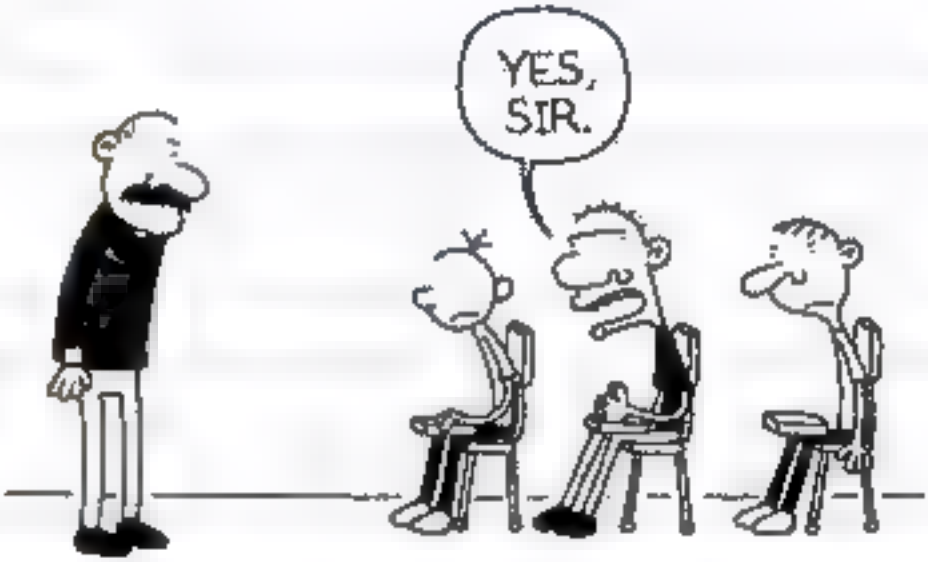
Kenny was on my soccer team, and he still has a bone to pick with me for ruining his perfect season.

So Kenny was on my case the whole hour of detention. He was constantly flicking my ears and blowing spitballs in my hair and giving me Wet Willies. And Kenny was really good at sneaking in his attacks when Mr. Bertrand, the moderator, wasn't looking, so I had to just sit there and take it.

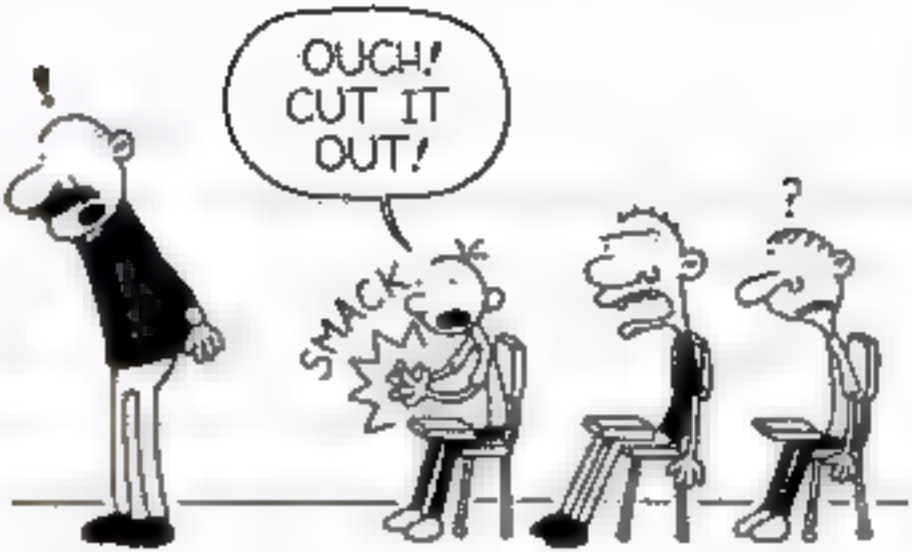


But after about 20 minutes of abuse Kenny got a little careless, and Mr. Bertrand looked up right when Kenny was knocking on the back of my head like it was somebody's front door.

Mr. Bertrand jumped out of his chair and yelled at Kenny for bothering me. Then Mr. Bertrand said that if he caught Kenny laying a hand on me one more time, it would be two weeks of detention.



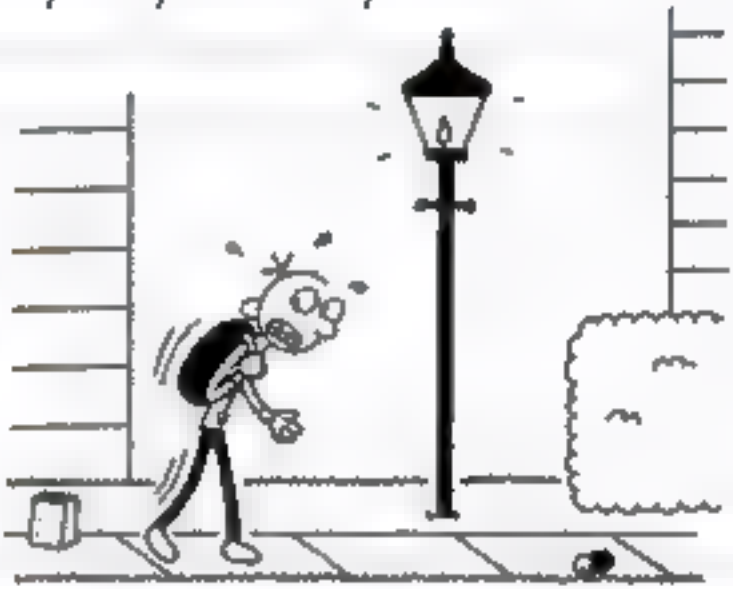
Well, opportunities like this don't come up for me too often, so as soon as Mr. Bertrand turned around to walk back to his desk, I took action.



My plan worked out perfectly, and you wouldn't believe how mad Mr. Bertrand was at Kenny.

Mr. Betrand delivered on his promise and handed Kenny two more weeks of detention, then made him sit in the chair next to his desk. And aside from Kenny trying to burn holes in me with his eyes from his seat at the front of the room, the rest of detention was pretty peaceful.

All in all, I think my idea was a decent short-term solution but maybe not so smart for the long run. Because my walk home brings me right through Kenny's neighborhood, and it's been getting dark out awfully early these days.



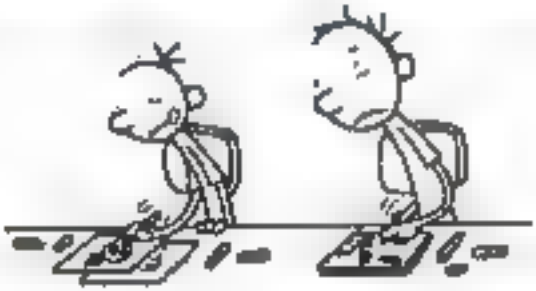
Thursday, January 20th

Mom and Dad have been riding Rodrick for the past few days because his science fair project is coming up. His project isn't actually due for a while but they don't want to see a repeat of what happened last year.

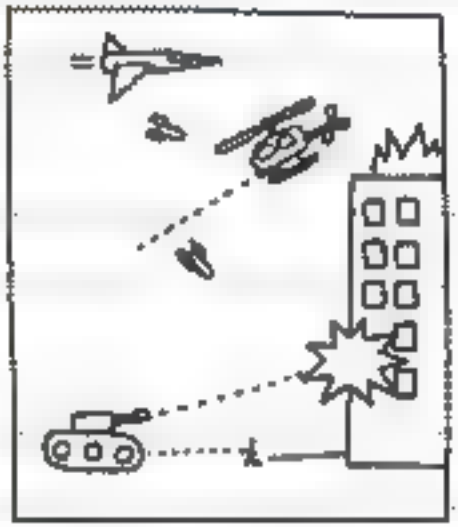
Rodrick's last science project was called "Does Watching Violent Movies Make People Think Violent Thoughts?" The experiment was to have people watch horror movies and then make them draw pictures afterwards to show how the movies affected them. But it was really just an excuse for Rodrick and his friends to watch a pile of horror movies.

Well, Rodrick's friends got the movie-watching part done but none of them ever drew any pictures. So the night before the project was due, Rodrick didn't have anything to show for himself. And if Rodrick failed this project, he was going to have to go to summer school.

Mom found out the state of Rodrick's project at about midnight, and she woke me and Dad up to recruit us to draw phony pictures. So me and Dad sat at the kitchen table drawing while Mom got Rodrick set up on the computer.



We did our best to imagine what a couple of teenage boys would draw after watching a bunch of violent movies. Dad mostly drew war scenes and I drew the kinds of things that are always tatooed on people's arms in Rodrick's heavy metal magazines.

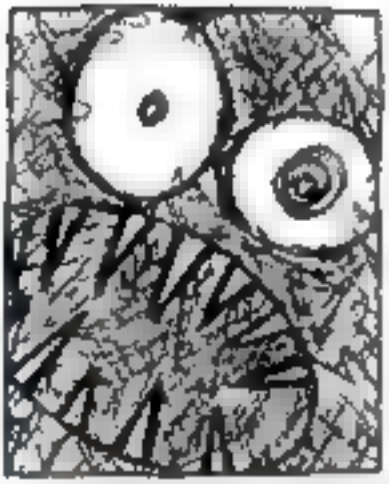


We finished at about 3:00 a.m. and handed the drawings off to Mom, who stapled everything together and sent Rodrick off to school with the finished product.

The funny thing is, I caught heat from Mom when she saw the drawings I did. She said they were "disturbing," and she even banned me from seeing movies that were rated anything but "G."

But if she wanted to see "disturbing," she should have taken a look at some of the stuff Manny was coming up with those days. One night, Rodrick accidentally left one of his horror movies in the machine and when Manny went to turn on Sesame Street in the morning, he got Rodrick's movie instead.

I came across a couple of Manny's drawings after that and some of them were enough to give me nightmares.



Anyway, I think Mom and Dad really learned their lesson after Rodrick's science project fiasco. He passed his class, but just barely. And when he brought his paper home, he didn't even acknowledge that anyone helped him out. So this year, Mom and Dad let Rodrick know that he's on his own.

Friday, January 21st

Last night I made the mistake of letting Sweetie in my room while I was doing my homework. He jumped up on my bed and went right to sleep. When I was ready to go to sleep myself, I tried to get the dog off my bed, but he wasn't having it.

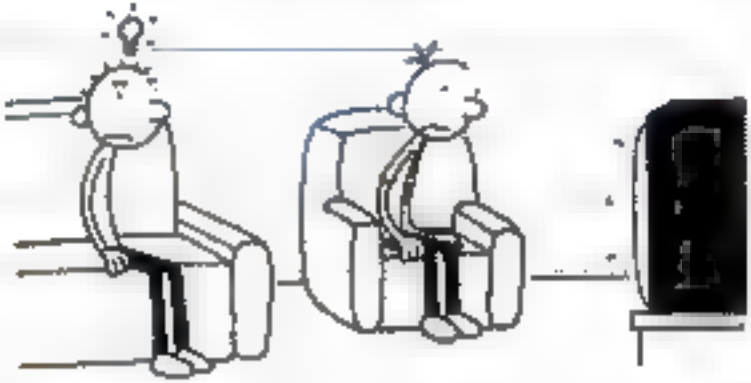
So I had to share my bed with Sweetie. He slept right smack in the middle of the bed, so I spent the whole night trying to figure out a way to get comfortable, which I never did.

And since I couldn't get the dog off my comforter, I had to sleep on top of it, so I was freezing cold.

After getting no sleep, staying awake in Mr. Peters' class was impossible. And nobody bothered to let me know when class ended, so I didn't even wake up until the next period, when the class had changed over and Mrs. Borners' social studies class was in session.

It was pretty embarrassing, but I was just happy Mr. Peters didn't give me another detention. Because sending me back to detention hall with Kenny Keith would have been like a death sentence.

Things were pretty tense at home tonight. Mom and Dad set up "milestones" for Rodrick to make sure he stayed on track with his science project. Tonight, Rodrick was supposed to tell Mom and Dad what the topic for his science project was going to be, and at 6:00 Rodrick still didn't have an idea. But then he saw something on t.v. that sparked a thought.



There was this show on about astronauts, and it said that after astronauts come back to Earth after being in space for a long time, they are actually taller than when they left. That's because in space, there's no gravity, so their spines decompress and the astronauts end up being an inch or two taller for a while.

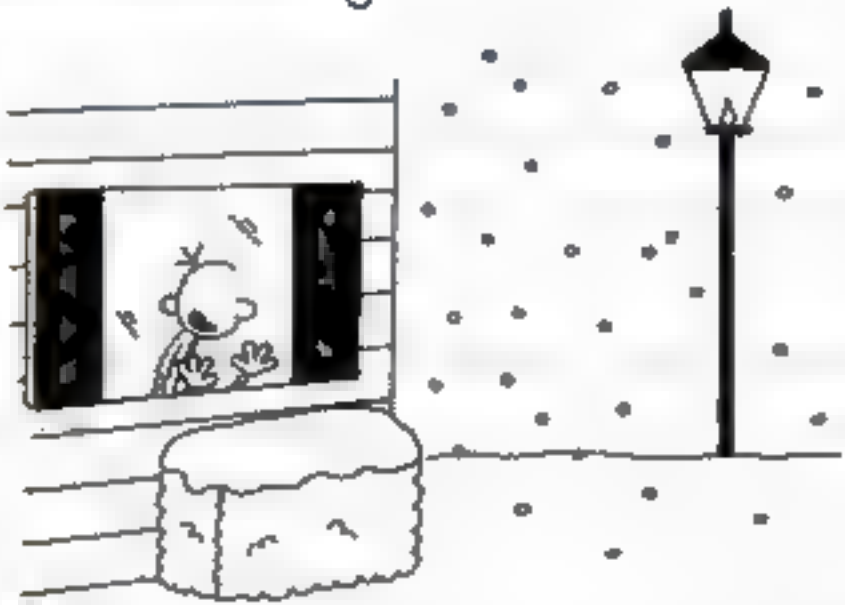
Well, Rodrick told Mom and Dad all about the show and said he wanted to do an experiment to simulate "zero gravity." His plan is to stay horizontal as often as possible to see if his spine will decompress and make him get taller.

Rodrick sold the idea like the results of his experiment would benefit mankind, but Mom saw right through it as an excuse for Rodrick to lay around all the time. But Dad was all for it. He was just happy Rodrick met his first milestone on time and that there weren't going to be any midnight wakeup calls like last year.

But I think Dad started to see things different when he told Rodrick it was time to drive me to swim practice.

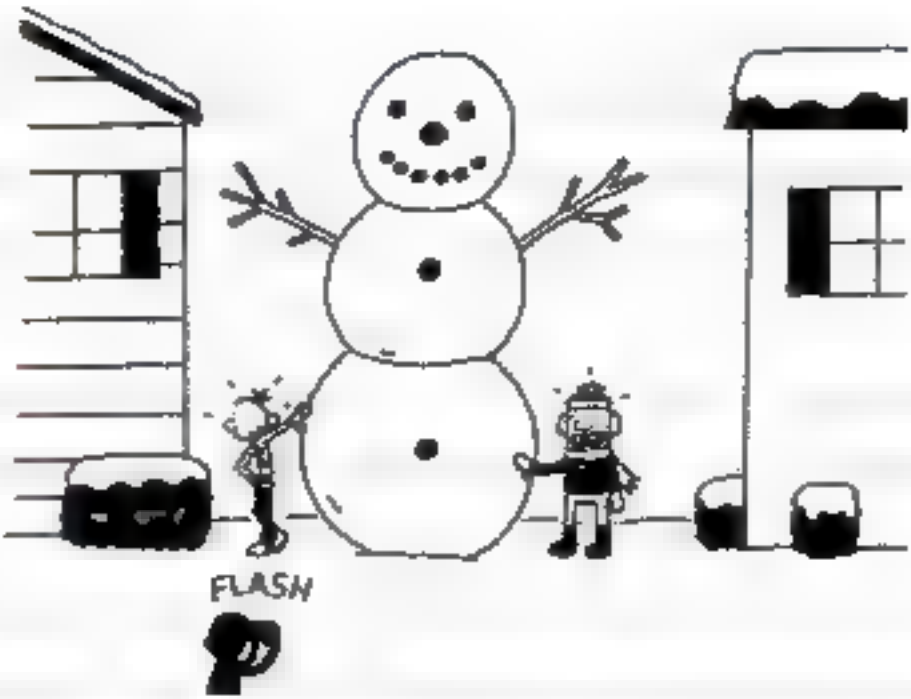
Saturday, January 22nd

Tonight we had our first real snowstorm. It would have been better if it started snowing on a school night, but I was still pretty happy when I saw the first flakes falling.



I called Rowley right away and told him to come over. Me and Rowley have been talking about building the world's biggest snowman for the past couple of years, but every time we get serious about it the snow has all melted and we've missed our chance.

And when I say the world's biggest snowman, I'm not kidding. Our goal is to get in the Guinness Book of World Records.

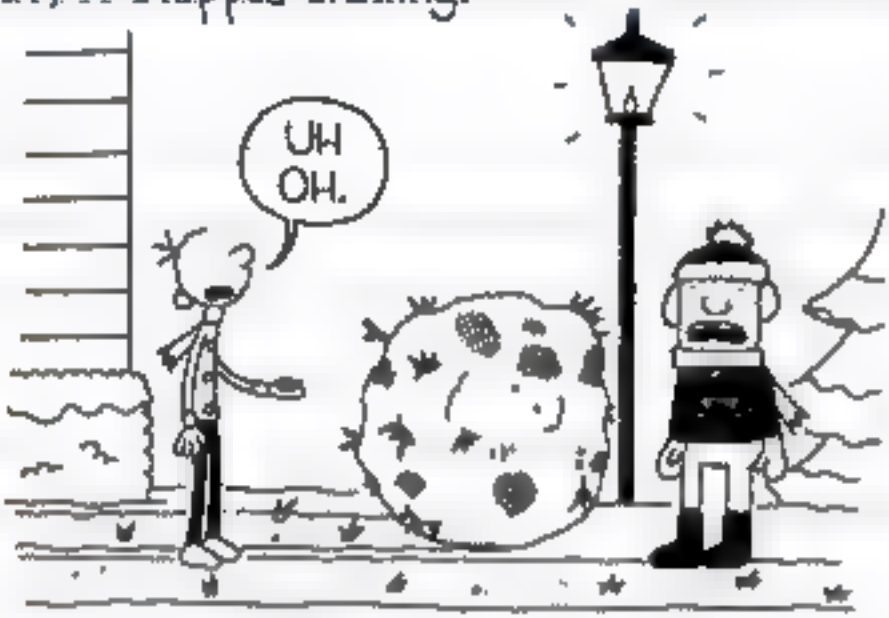


When Rowley showed up, we got right to work. We started rolling the first snowball to make the base of the snowman. I figured it had to be at least eight feet tall for us to have a shot at breaking the record.

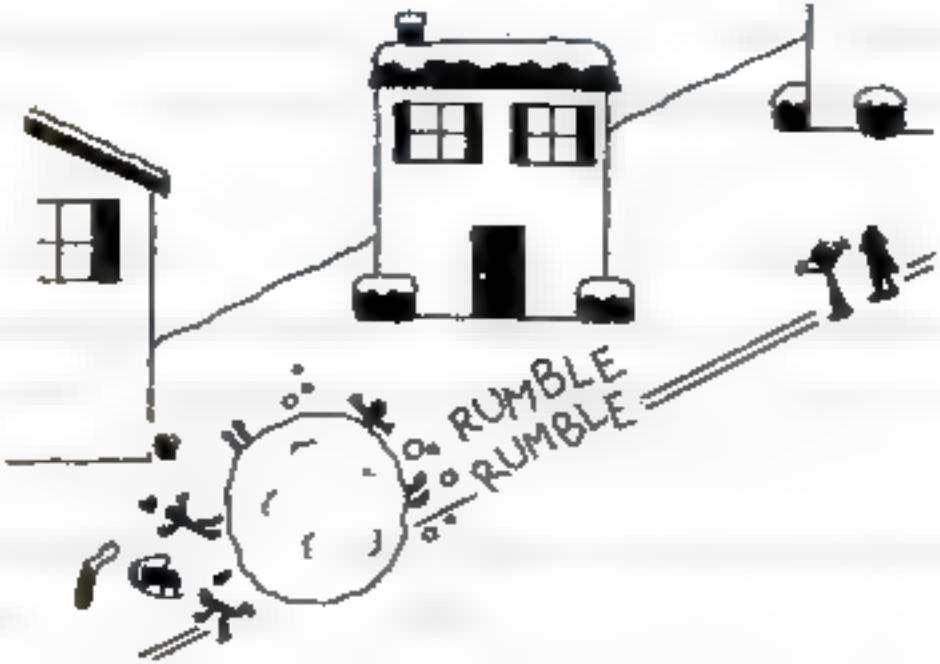
But that thing got HEAVY, and we had to take a couple of breaks in between rolls so we could catch our breath. During one of our breaks, Mom came outside to go to the grocery store, but our snowball was behind her car and she was blocked in. So we got a little free labor out of her, and Mom's work added about six extra inches to the diameter of our snowball.

Me and Rowley kept pushing that snowball until it got too heavy to push any further. I thought about going inside to get Dad and Rodrick to help us.

But when I looked back at our lawn, I got a sick feeling in my stomach. The snowball had gotten so heavy that it tore up the sod Dad had just laid down this fall. I was hoping it would snow a few more inches and cover up our crime, but just like that, it stopped snowing.



Plus, my hope for building the world's biggest snowman was out the window. We had used up all the snow in our lawn, and besides, our snowball was more mud and grass than actual snow. So I came up with another plan. Every time it snows, the kids from Whirley Drive come up our hill to use our street for sledding, even though they don't even live here. So tomorrow morning, me and Rowley are going to teach those kids a lesson.



Sunday, January 23rd

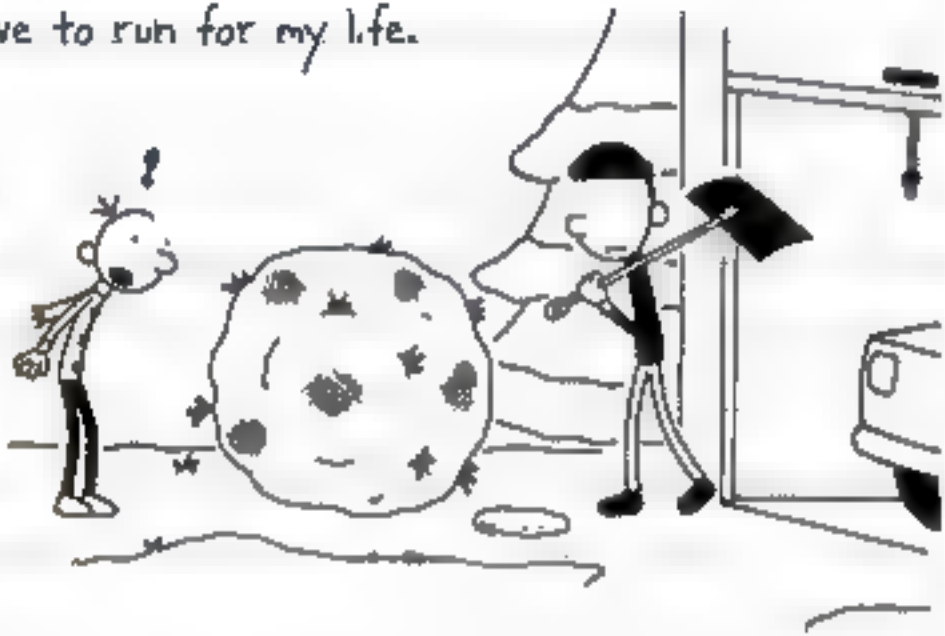
The snow was already starting to melt when I woke up this morning, and our front lawn looked even worse than it did last night. I called Rowley and told him to come over quick so we could execute our plan to roll the snowball down the hill.

While I was waiting for Rowley I watched Manny trying to build a snowman out of the piddly bits of snow that were left over from last night.

Don't ask me what put the thought in my head, but I decided to have a little fun with Manny's miniature snowman. But unfortunately for me, Dad saw the whole thing from the front window.

I knew I was cooked when I heard the garage door opening and I saw Dad's legs in the doorway.

Dad marched right out carrying a snow shovel over his shoulder, and I thought I was going to have to run for my life.



But Dad was walking towards the snowball, not me. And in less than a minute, he had reduced our hard work to a pile of crumbs.

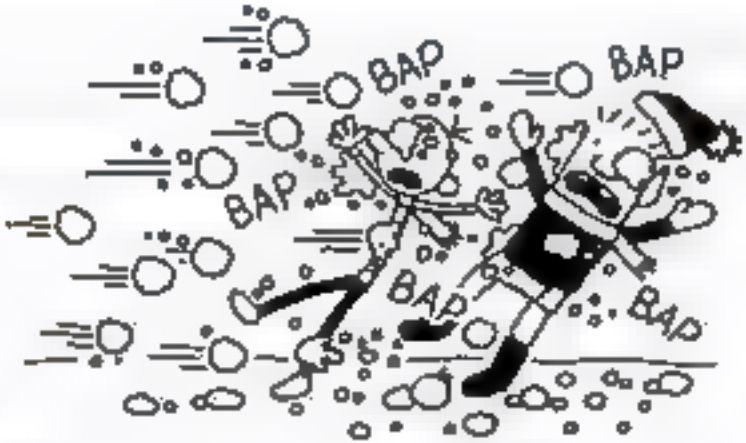
To be honest with you, I was pretty impressed with how efficient Dad was with that snow shovel.

After that, Dad just calmly walked back the way he came.

Rowley showed up a few minutes later. I thought Rowley might get a laugh out of what happened, but he had been really excited to roll the snowball down the hill and so he didn't really see the humor in the situation.

Rowley was super mad that all our work had gone to waste, and he blamed it all on me. I told him we could just make another snowball in his front yard, but Rowley didn't want to hear it.

I told Rowley he was being a big baby, and we started to get into a shoving match. But right when it looked like we were going to get into an all-out fight, we got hit with an ambush from the street.



It was a hit-and-run attack by the Whirley Street kids. And if Mrs. George, our English teacher, was there, I'm sure she would have said the whole episode was "ironic."

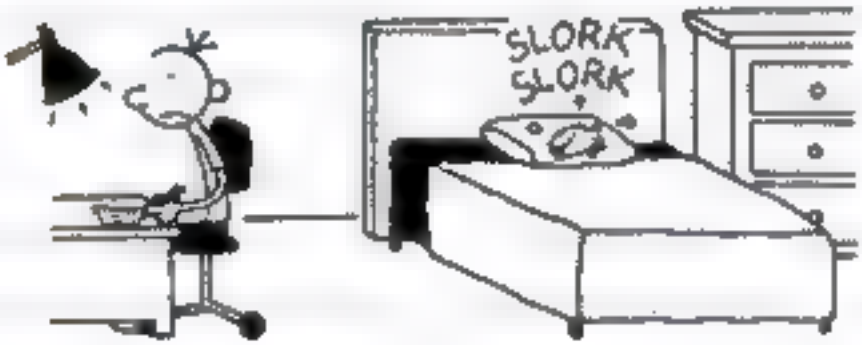
Monday, January 24th

So far, having a dog has been WAY different than I expected. I guess I've seen too many dog food commercials or something, because I had a picture in my mind of what having a dog would be like, and it's not even close to accurate.

Sweetie hasn't warmed up to anyone in the family but Mom. Sweetie stays in my room every night, but it's not because he likes me. He's basically just using me for my bed.

Sweetie scratches at my door every night around 8:00 and whines until I let him in. Then he walks right past me and jumps up on my bed, where he starts grooming himself. He licks all four paws and his nubby little tail until everything is soaking wet.

And he's not quiet about it, either. Tonight, it was a real problem. I've got a huge History paper due on Wednesday and I couldn't concentrate with the racket the dog was making.



I always have to remember to flip my pillow over before I go to sleep. Because once or twice, I've forgotten to, and I've laid my head down right on the wet spot.

I've given up on trying to get any kind of affection out of the dog, but Dad hasn't. Dad can't figure out why Sweetie loves Mom so much when she barely gives Sweetie any attention at all.

Dad is always trying to get Sweetie to nuzzle him or give him a little kiss, but Sweetie is just not interested.

Tonight Dad was pulling this routine on Sweetie, and believe it or not, Sweetie actually gave him a little lick on the nose. I don't know if Sweetie was just trying to kiss Dad to get it over with, or if he smelled some spaghetti sauce on Dad's face.

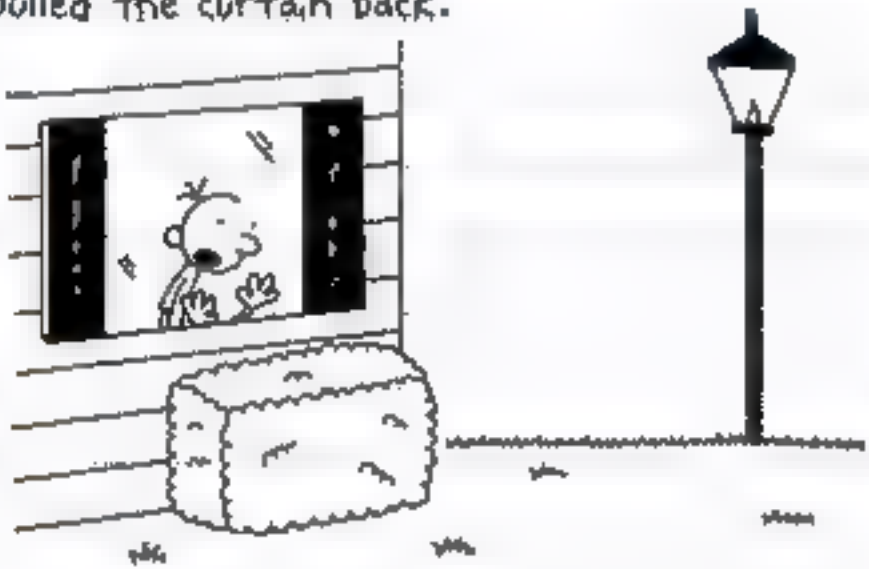
But from the look on Dad's face, you'd think he won the lottery.

And maybe if Dad hadn't destroyed my giant snowball yesterday, I would have warned him that Sweetie had just spent the past half hour licking his rear end in my bedroom.

Tuesday, January 25th

My big history paper is due tomorrow, but since a big snowstorm was supposed to blow in around 6:00 and snow for two days straight, I wasn't too worried about it.

At around 11:00, I took a peek out the window to see how many inches of snow had fallen so far. I almost fainted when I pulled the curtain back.

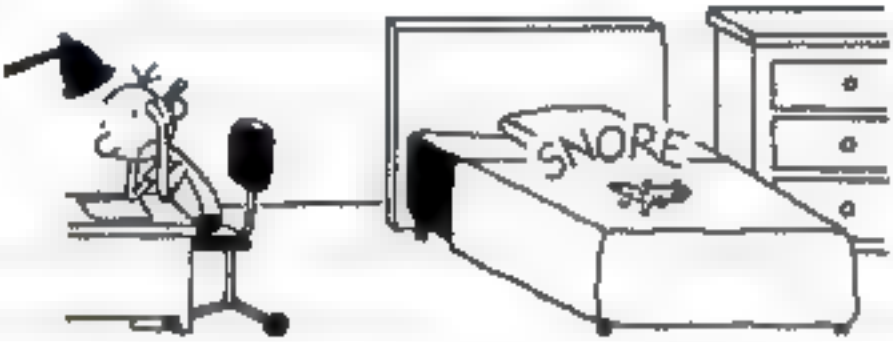


I turned on the news to see what happened to the blizzard that was supposed to be happening right about now. But the weather guy was telling a completely different story than he was a few hours ago.

I think the weather guy should have to personally apologize to every kid like me who plans his whole life around these crummy forecasts.

Now that I knew school wasn't going to be cancelled, I had to actually start my History project. We're reading this book in class called The Iliad, which is a really long poem about a war that happened in Greece. So our assignment is to write a poem about the period in history that most interests us.

But there were two problems with this. One, I don't know the first thing about history, and two, I couldn't concentrate with Sweetie snoring on my bed.

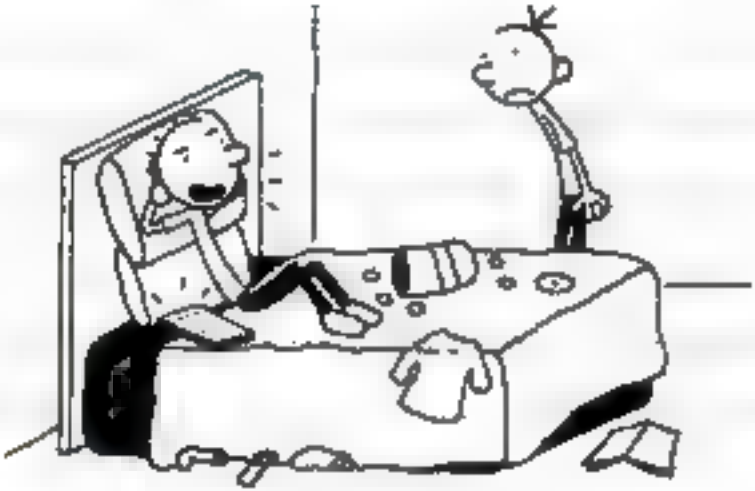


But then I had a brilliant idea. I remembered back to all the times Dad helped Rodrick out by typing his History papers for him, and I figured if there was ever a time when I was going to call on Dad to get me out of a pinch, it was tonight.

So I told Dad all about my History assignment. I was hoping he would get the hint and offer to jump right in and help out. But unfortunately for me, Dad seems to have learned his lesson from all his experiences with Rodrick's papers.

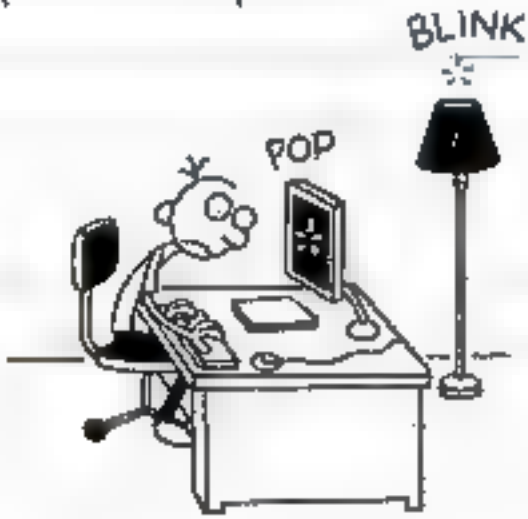
So I was on my own. But right when I had practically given up hope, Rodrick pulled me aside and made me an offer.

It turns out Rodrick had Mrs. Lions, my History teacher, when he was in my grade, and she had given his class the EXACT same assignment. And Rodrick just so happened to have his old assignment, which he had dug out of his desk drawer and was sitting on his bed. Rodrick told me I could copy it word for word, and all it would cost me was one thousand Mom Bucks.

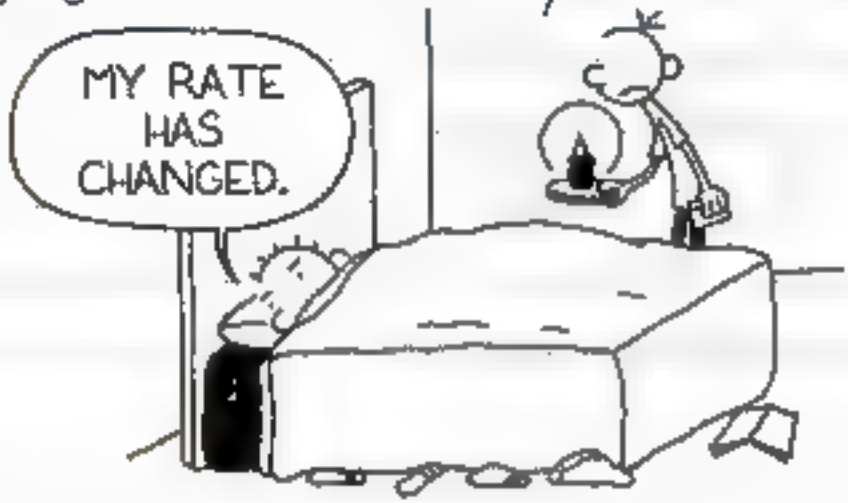


It was pretty tempting, because like I said, Dad has written every History paper Rodrick has ever been assigned. So I knew buying that paper was like guaranteeing myself an "A." But Rodrick's asking price was way too high. Even though I have about 100,000 dollars in counterfeit Mom Bucks left, I need that money to last me through high school, at least. So I said no deal.

I decided to just suck it up and do the paper myself. So I started doing some research on the computer. But at 2:00 a.m., the worst possible thing happened: the power went out.



I waited for the power to go back on, but nothing was happening. So now I was in some serious trouble. Finally, I decided to take Rodrick up on his offer, and I went down to the basement with one thousand Mom Bucks. But Rodrick wasn't going to let me off that easy.



He had me against the ropes, and he knew it. Rodrick ended up squeezing me for TEN THOUSAND Mom Bucks. I griped and groaned when I handed over the cash, but at that point, I was just glad to take my paper and go to bed.

Wednesday, January 26th

I got to school early this morning so I could copy Rodrick's history paper before class started. But the first sign that something was seriously wrong was that the paper wasn't typewritten. It was in Rodrick's own handwriting.

The whole reason I bought the paper off Rodrick is because Dad used to write all Rodrick's papers for him. That's the whole reason Rodrick passed History. And all of the sudden it hit me. When Rodrick was in the seventh grade, he got in a big fight with Dad, and they didn't speak to each other for about a month. So Rodrick must have had to do this paper without Dad's help.

Like I said before, the assignment was to write a poem about the period in history that interests you the most. So I held my breath and read Rodrick's paper, to see if it was usable.

A Hundred Years Ago

by Rodrick Heffley

Sometimes I sit and wonder
About stuff I don't know
Like what the heck the earth was like
A hundred years ago.

Did caveman ride on dinosaurs?
Did flowers even grow?
Well I could guess but that was back
A hundred years ago.

I wish they built a time machine
And they picked me to go
To check out what the scene was like
A hundred years ago.

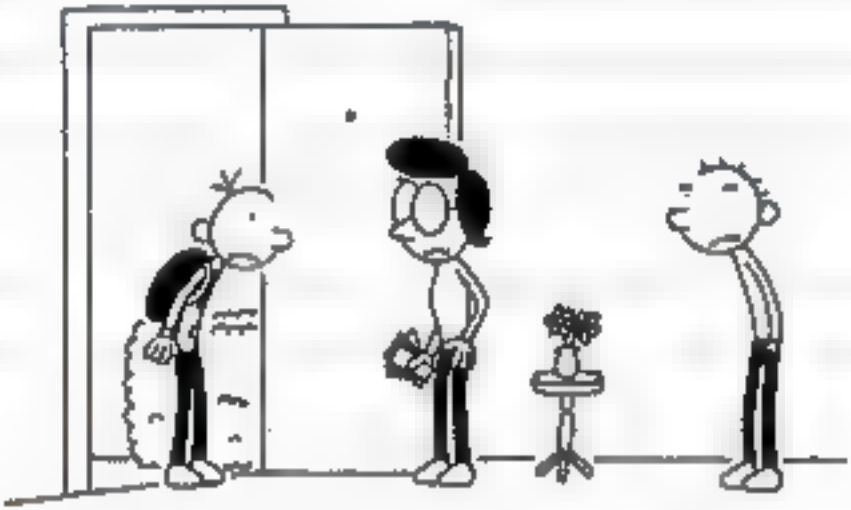
Did giant spiders rule the earth?
Were deserts filled with snow?
I wonder what the story was
A hundred years ago.

I guess we'll always wonder
But we will never know
The crazy stuff that happened here
A hundred years ago.

F See me!

It looks like Rodrick puts even less effort into research than I do. And needless to say, his paper ended up in the first trash can I could find. I decided I was going to just have to take my "F" like a man and move on.

When I got home, Mom was waiting for me at the front door. It turns out Rodrick had tried to cash in all 10,000 of his Mom Bucks for a used motorcycle. But of course Mom knew something was fishy since she never put more than a thousand Mom Bucks into circulation at one time.



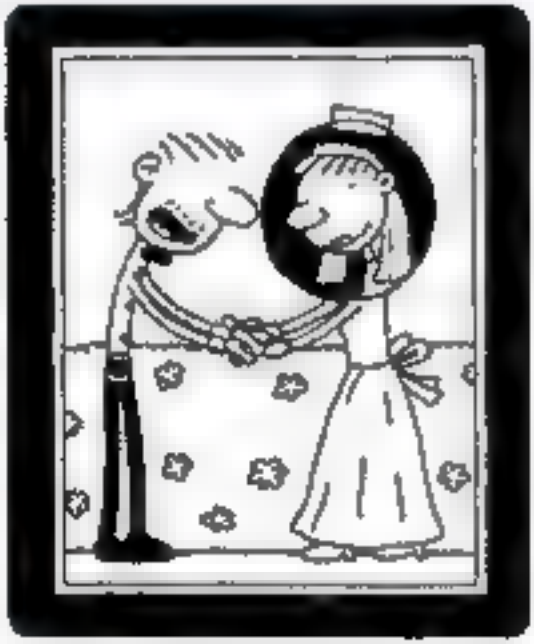
Mom made me cough up the rest of my stash, even the money I earned legitimately. Then she said the Mom Bucks program is officially over. To be honest with you, I'm pretty relieved. Keeping all of that counterfeit cash hidden in my room was really stressing me out.

Now Rodrick's mad at me for paying him in fake money, and I'm mad at him for selling me a worthless paper. And of course Mom's mad at both of us. But the person who is really to blame is the weather guy, whose crummy forecast started this whole mess.

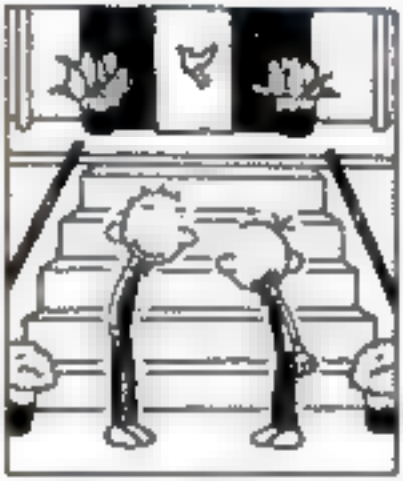
I figured Mom was going to lay down some kind of punishment tonight, but a phone call during dinner distracted Mom and saved the day.

It was Gramma, calling Mom to tell her that Uncle Gary is getting married. You might think this would be really big news, but Uncle Gary has been married three times before.

Uncle Gary's not a bad guy or anything. He just jumps into these relationships that move too fast and end up flaming out. So Uncle Gary's weddings have become a regular thing, like Thanksgiving or Easter. When he got married the last time, Gramma didn't even bother to replace the wedding picture on her dresser. She just cut out the head of wife #3 and pasted it on top of wife #2.



Most kids have growth charts on their pantry door to show how tall they've gotten over the years, but not us. If we need to check our progress, we use our pictures from Uncle Gary's weddings.



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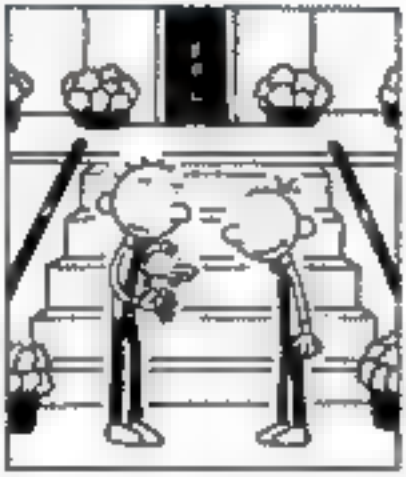

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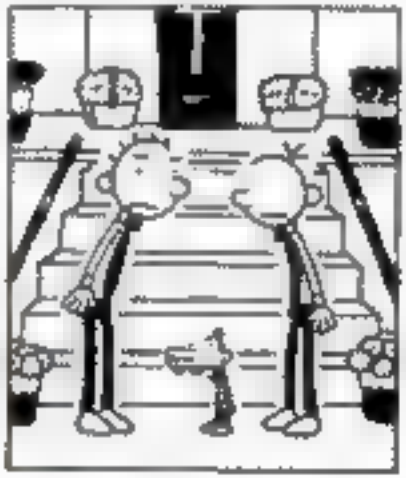
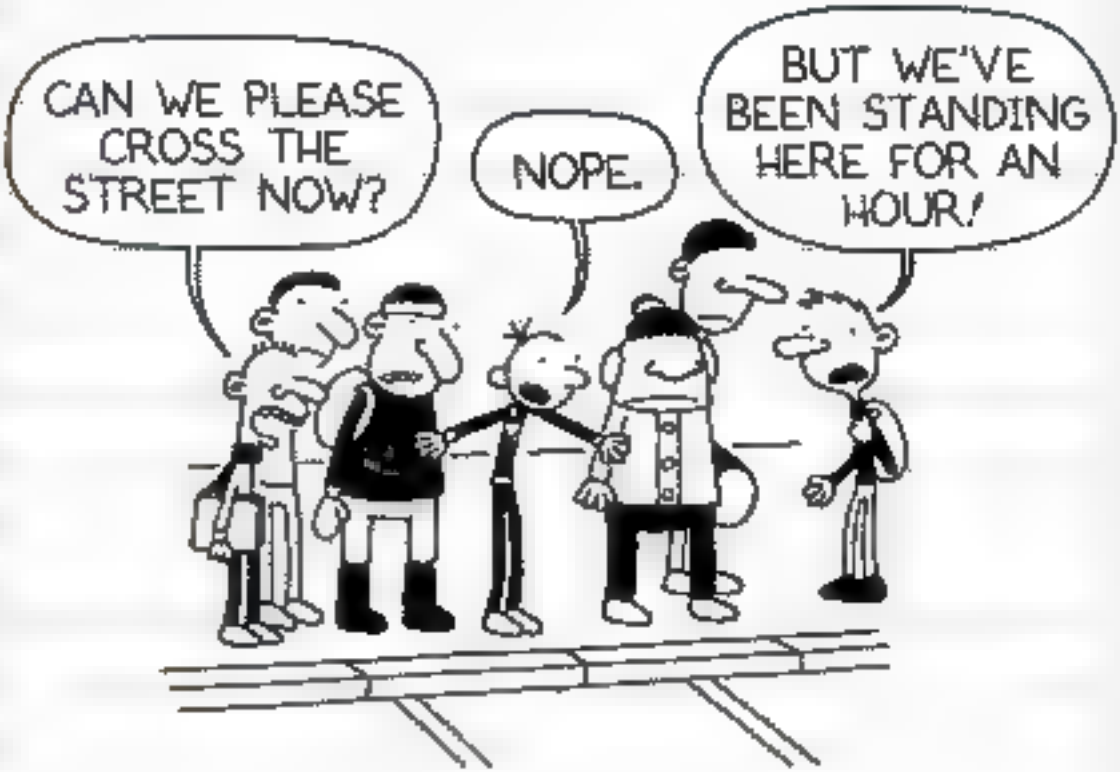


#3

Thursday, January 27th

Like I said before, Dad has been all over my case the last couple of weeks. Lately, he's been pushing me to sign up to be a safety patrol.

At first I didn't want to do it, but then I realized that maybe having a position of authority could be good for me.

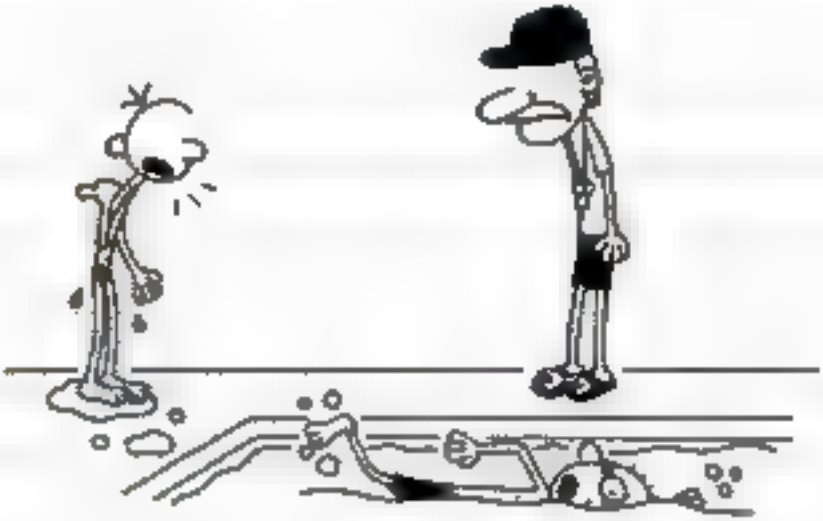


Plus, I found out that safety patrols get free hot chocolate in the morning before school, and that they're allowed to be 10 minutes late to class.

And most importantly, Kenny Keith gets out of detention about 10 days from now. I figure if I'm protected by a badge, he can't mess with me like he could if I was a regular civilian. So I signed up today, and I got Rowley to sign up, too.

Tonight was a swim practice night. I decided I've about had it with the whole winter swim team thing at this point, so I came up with a plan.

About five minutes into practice, I asked the coach if I could use the bathroom. My plan was to just sit in the locker room and wait out practice. I figured hanging out in a bathroom stall was way better than getting knocked around in an overcrowded lane for an hour and a half.



The problem was that I couldn't take my towel to the bathroom with me, or the coach might get suspicious. And I never realized how cold it is in that locker room until tonight.

The other problem was that the lights in the locker room are the kind that automatically turn on and off depending on if someone's in the room. So after about five minutes, the lights shut off and I was in the pitch black. I tried to throw wads of toilet paper over the wall to make the lights turn back on, but I didn't have any luck.

It got so cold in there that I finally had to wrap myself in toilet paper just to make sure I didn't get hypothermia. I started to wonder if this was all worth it. I would have just gone back out to practice, but it would have taken me 15 minutes to pick all of the wet toilet paper off of my body.

I've heard that when you get to heaven, they make you watch a tape of your whole life before letting you in. All I can say is, I hope they have a fast forward button or something, because I definitely do not need to experience this episode again.

Friday, January 28th

I finally solved the mystery of why Dad has been riding me so hard lately. It all came together when I found a flyer on the table by his bed.

So that's what Dad has been up to all this time. He's been trying to make sure I shape up so I get accepted to Bishop Garrigan High School. I'm not even in the eighth grade yet, but it looks like they've got some sort of deal where they lock you in early.

I wasn't too worried about Bishop Garrigan because it was so far off in the future, but now I realize I've got to take drastic measures or Dad is going to lay his money down Monday night and there will be no getting out of it.

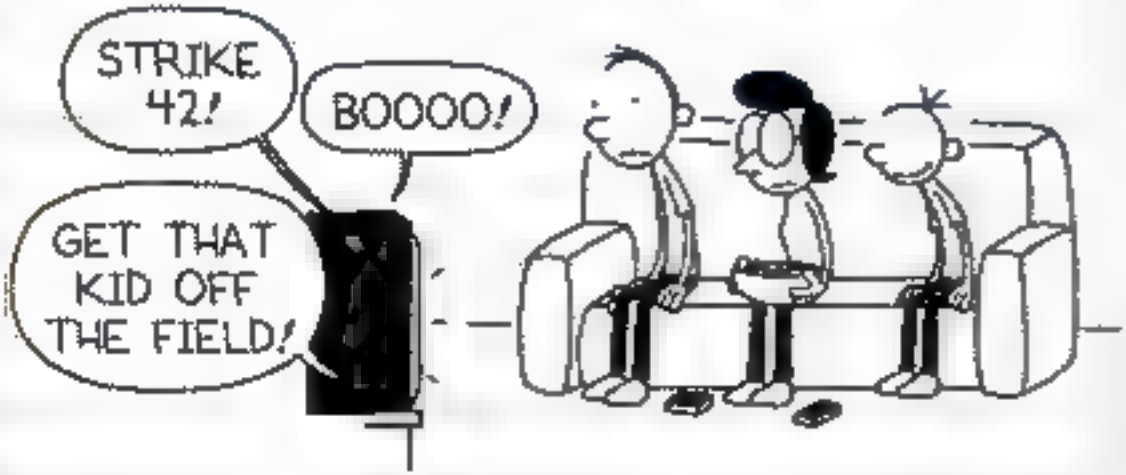
You would think Dad would have realized by now that I'm not exactly Garrigan material, but I guess he hasn't been paying attention the past 12 years.

So this weekend, I've got to drum it into Dad's head that he's wasting his time trying to get me into Bishop Garrigan. I have a plan laid out, but it's going to take the whole weekend to execute it.

First of all, Dad should know that my school years haven't exactly been marked by "academic distinction." I'm thinking this weekend is a good time to announce my Science Fair project topic to Mom and Dad, which is, "Can My Brother Grow By Just Staying Horizontal?"

The "integrity" thing should be pretty easy. Me and Rowley were going to do a bunch of prank calls down in the basement this weekend, but now we'll just do them out in the open. Our neighbor, Mr. Blair, just dropped his BMW off at the garage to have the windshield wipers replaced. So I'm going to call him and pretend I'm the mechanic and say I accidentally sent his car to the junk yard, where it got squashed by the trash compactor.

And I've got a plan to remind Dad about my athletic skills, too. Mom has been having these Family Movie Nights on Sundays. So all I have to do is slip in a tape of any one of my past tee ball performances and that should do the trick. I just hope I can find the one where I singlehandedly caused a game to last three hours. They had to change the "no strikeouts" rule after that.



I have a couple of other tricks up my sleeve, too. I guarantee after this weekend, Dad will cancel plans for the open house on Monday and just keep his $500.

Saturday, January 29th

When I woke up this morning, I was all set to start proving I wasn't cut out for Bishop Garrigan to Dad. But my plan hit a snag when Mom told me we needed to drop off a desk at Grandpa's apartment, and she wanted me to help Dad carry it.

I couldn't figure out why Dad needed my help, because the desk was really light. But by the time I realized what was really happening, it was too late.

Mom and Dad pulled a Dump and Run on me, and I can't believe I didn't see it coming. Mom and Dad decided at the last minute to drive out to meet Uncle Gary's new fiancee, and so I got dumped off at Grandpa's for the weekend.

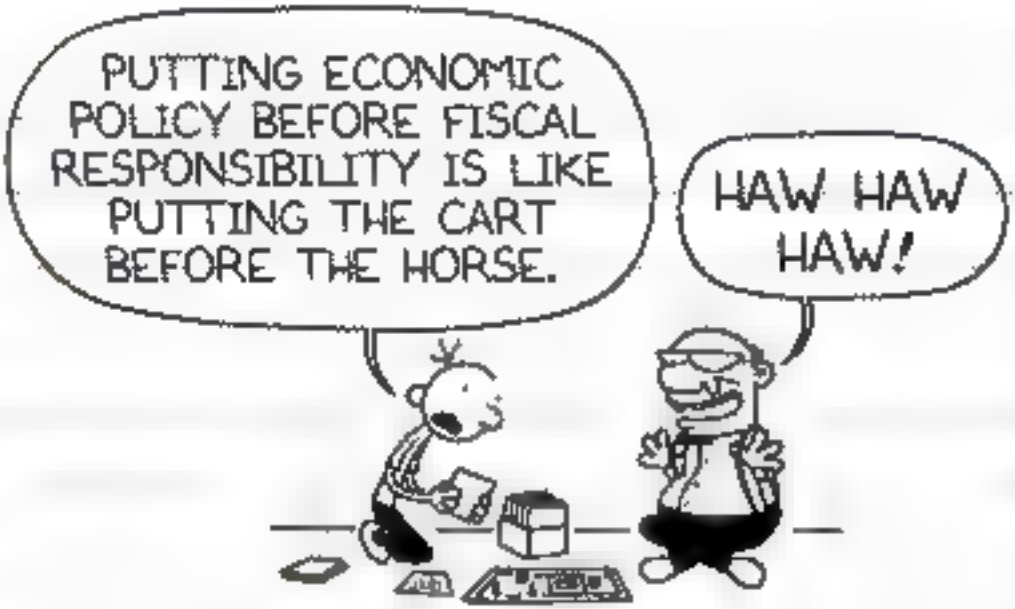
Every time Mom and Dad go out of town, they pull something like this. They never let us know where they're going, because they're afraid that if Rodrick knows they won't be home, he'll plan a big party at our house. Over the summer, Mom and Dad went on a trip, and we didn't even know they were officially gone until two days before they came back.

Now it was all starting to make sense. Manny was at Gramma's for the weekend and Mom and Dad let Rodrick go skiing with Ward. And now I was in a panic because 1) I wasn't going to have enough time to persuade Dad I wasn't fit for Bishop Garrigan and 2) I was stuck at Grandpa's with nothing to do.

Spending the weekend at Grandpa's is worse than prison. Grandpa doesn't have anything in his apartment that a kid could play with, except a wind-up Santa that plays "Jingle Bells." But I broke that thing the last time I got stuck here, so I don't even have that as an entertainment option anymore.

I wish Mom and Dad at least gave me some warning, so I could have packed up my video games or something. Because I got stuck watching what Grandpa wanted to watch on t.v. And Grandpa doesn't even watch real shows. He just keeps his t.v. tuned to the channel that shows what's going on in the main lobby of his building, where they have a security camera pointed at the front door. So he just sits there and watches people come and go all day long.

At night, things slowed down in the main lobby, so Grandpa turned off the t.v. Then he pulled out this old board game called "Gutbusters" out of his closet and set it up. Grandpa has made me play Gutbusters with him before, and it's the dumbest game in the world. One guy reads a card with a phrase on it, and the other guys has to try not to laugh. I always beat Grandpa when we play, mostly because the game was made about 70 years ago and I don't even understand what the phrases on the cards are supposed to mean.



The only bright spot about today was that Rodrick wasn't here. The last time Rodrick was here, Grandpa made us play Gutbusters, too.

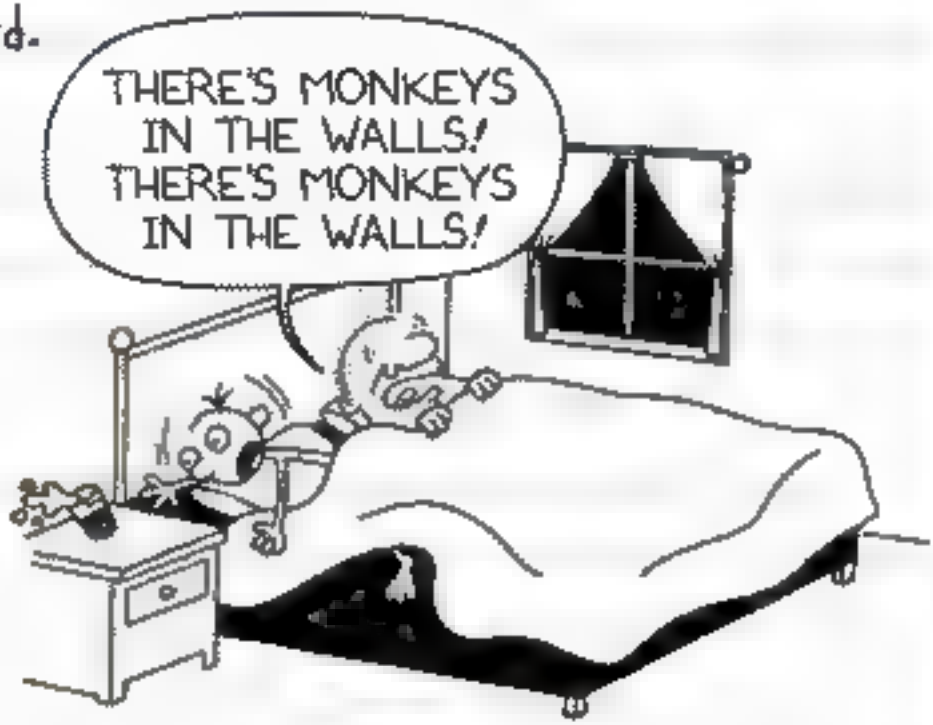
And every time it was my turn to read a card, Rodrick made sure he had a really big mouthful of milk.

Sunday, January 30th

Last night was the official new Most Horrible Night of My Life. And it started with the fact that I had to share a bed with Grandpa.

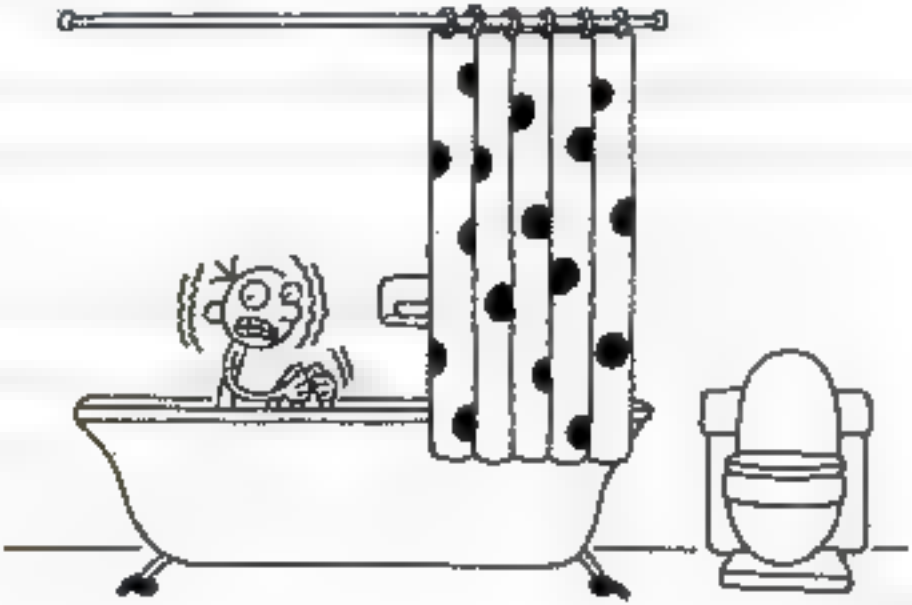
If Mom and Dad had warned me they were going to dump me off at Grandpa's I could've at least packed a sleeping bag and slept on the floor. With all of Grandpa's snoring and thrashing around, I couldn't fall asleep.

But sometime around 2:00 a.m., Grandpa woke up and started shouting the craziest thing I ever heard.



At least I THOUGHT Grandpa was awake. But on the car ride home today, Mom and Dad explained to me that Grandpa has this thing called "night terrors," which is basically like a nightmare you have when you're half-awake.

It would have been nice if they had warned me about this night terrors thing before leaving me at Grandpa's for the night. Because when Grandpa started saying there were monkeys in the walls, I took his word for it. So I spent the whole rest of the night sitting in the bath tub with all the lights on.

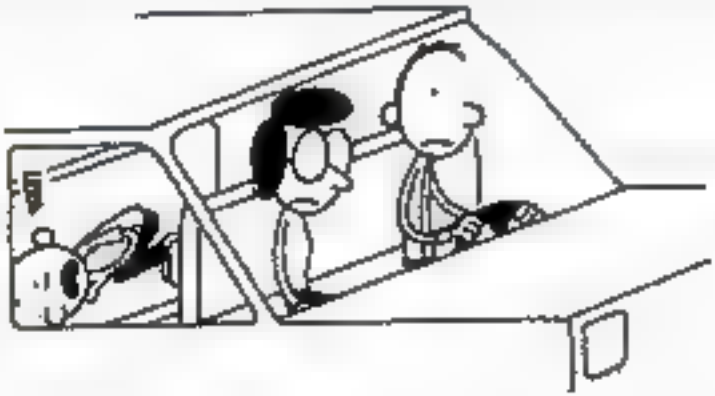


Grandpa woke up this morning and came into the bathroom like nothing had even happened.

I couldn't wait for Mom and Dad to come rescue me this afternoon. I figured there was still enough time to execute some of my plan to try to get out of going to Bishop Garrigan. But as soon as I got in the car, I got these really bad stomach cramps, and I could hardly even talk.

It's all because of what I ate this weekend. Whenever Grandpa tried to feed me his water crest salad, I told him I wasn't hungry. So I had to survive on these wrapped candies Grandpa had in a jar in his living room.

I must have eaten about 30 of those things. And when I told Mom and Dad what I ate, they thought they were going to have to take me to the emergency room. Dad said those candies have been in that jar since he was a little boy, and that they were for "decoration only."

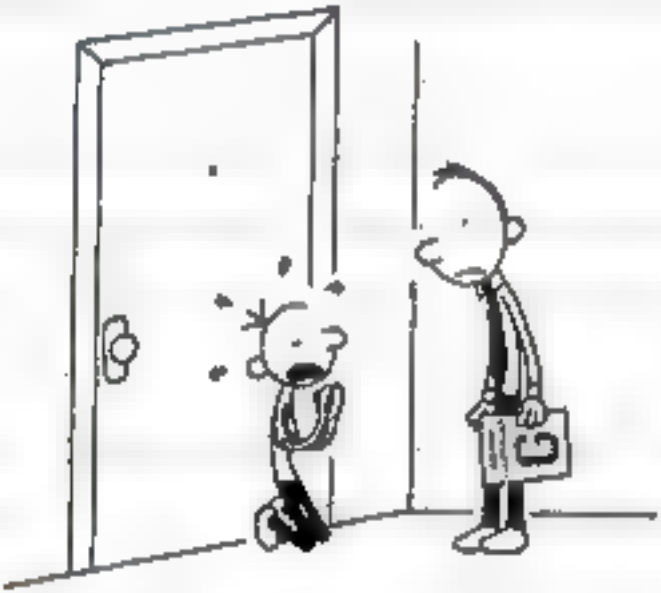


Luckily, the cramps went away around 7:00 p.m.. But I'm so tired from last night, I can barely keep my eyes open. So it looks like there's no way I'm getting out of tomorrow's open house at Bishop Garrigan.

Monday, January 31st

Tonight was the night of the Bishop Garrigan open house. I knew if I didn't do something drastic, I was going to get stuck going to an all-boys' high school where I'd be stuffed in a locker every day for four years.

After dinner, Dad told me to put on my coat so we could get going. So I took the only course of action I had left: I begged not to go.



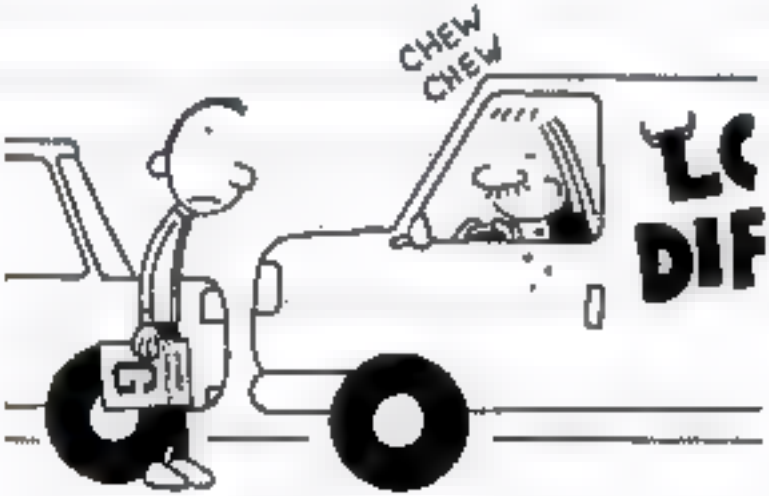
My begging didn't work, but I didn't really expect it to. There was no changing Dad's mind.

Bishop Garrigan had sent Dad a packet with all this information about the school, and he read through the whole thing at dinner. Apparently there are all these important people like senators and football players who graduated from Bishop Garrigan. Dad read me the whole list like I was hanging on every name.

So after dinner, I knew for sure there was no way of getting out of going.

The one thing my begging did was slow us down a little bit, which irritated Dad, because he hates to be late. But Dad got even more ticked off when he opened the front door and saw that his car was blocked in by a van in our driveway.

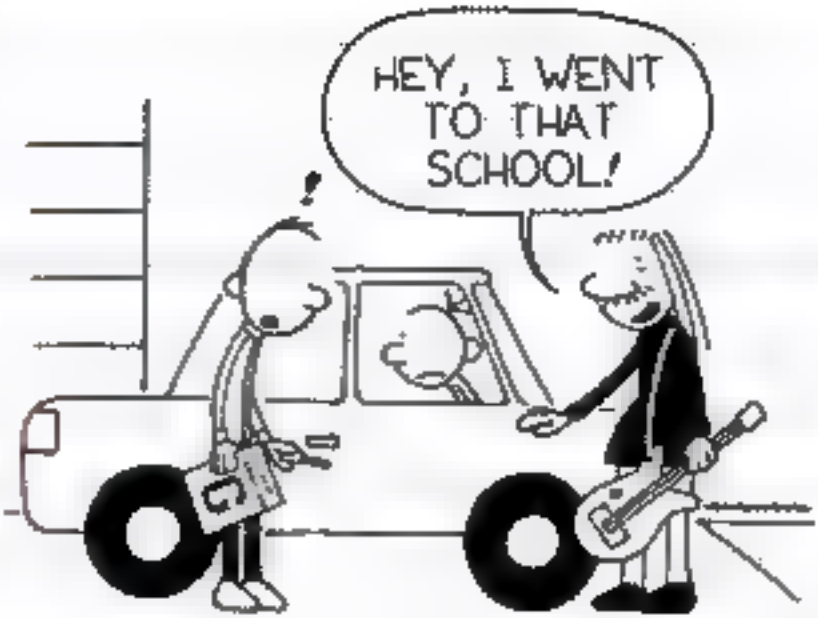
It was Bill, the guitarist in Rodrick's band. Bill has been coming over almost every night to practice with Rodrick for a talent show that's coming up. Bill was eating a hot dog and Dad had to wait until Bill was finished before he moved his van.



I'm sure I already mentioned it, but Dad really doesn't like Bill. Bill is about 30 years old, doesn't have a job, and lives in his parents' basement. I'm sure Dad doesn't like Bill hanging around with Rodrick because he doesn't want Rodrick to get any ideas.

Anyway, I got in the car while Bill parked his van on the street. I had pretty much given up any hope of getting out of the open house, and I knew I was doomed.

But when Bill walked by Dad, the folder in Dad's hand caught Bill's eye. And then Bill said six words that probably changed the whole course of my life.



After Bill walked by, Dad stood there for a full minute, like he was paralyzed. And then he just walked back inside without saying a word, and that was that.

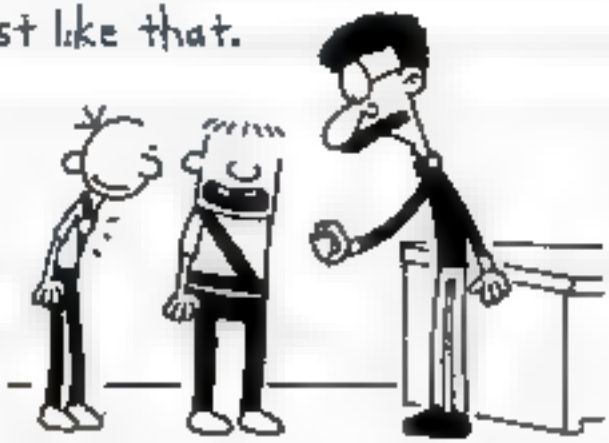
So a single appearance by Bill did what none of my fancy plans could do: it got me out of going to Bishop Garrigan.

Tuesday, February 1st

In school today they had a general assembly and showed this movie "Free to Be You and Me," which they show every year. The movie is all about how you should be happy with who you are and not change a thing about yourself. To be honest with you, I think it's a pretty dumb message to be sending out, and especially at my school. Because every time they show that movie, it's like giving a green light to all of the jerks to pick on the rest of us.

That's why I decided to finally go ahead and sign up to be a safety patrol. At my school, if someone harasses a safety patrol, it can get them suspended. And I figure I can use any extra protection I can get, especially with Kenny Keith getting out of his two-week detention tomorrow.

So me and Rowley went down to Mr. Winsky's office this afternoon and let him know we wanted to sign up. I figured we would have to do jumping jacks or chin-ups or something to prove we were up for the job, but he just gave us our badges and belts just like that.



Mr. Winsky sat us down and said all of the regular safety patrol assignments are already filled, but that he has a special duty that he could use us for. Our school is right next to Tasker Elementary, and they've got a half-day kindergarten there. So he wants us to walk the morning session kindergarteners home in the middle of the day. I realized right away it would mean missing most of French class. Rowley started to bring that up, but I gave him a wicked pinch underneath the desk before he could finish his sentence.

So now we're safety patrols. I couldn't believe my luck. I got out of French class and got instant bully protection by doing almost nothing at all.

I wore my patrol belt all day, and I even kept it on at home. I figured Dad would be pretty happy about me becoming a patrol, especially since it was his idea in the first place. But I guess now that Bishop Garrigan is out of the picture, my extracurricular activities aren't really on Dad's radar.

Wednesday, February 2nd

Today was me and Rowley's first offical day as safety patrols. We don't technically have stations like all the other patrols, so we don't have to stand out in the freezing cold for an hour before school.

But that didn't stop us from showing up for the hot chocolate they give out to patrols before first period.

But the thing I really wanted to test was if I could get away with being 10 minutes late to my first class, which is another big benefit of being a patrol.

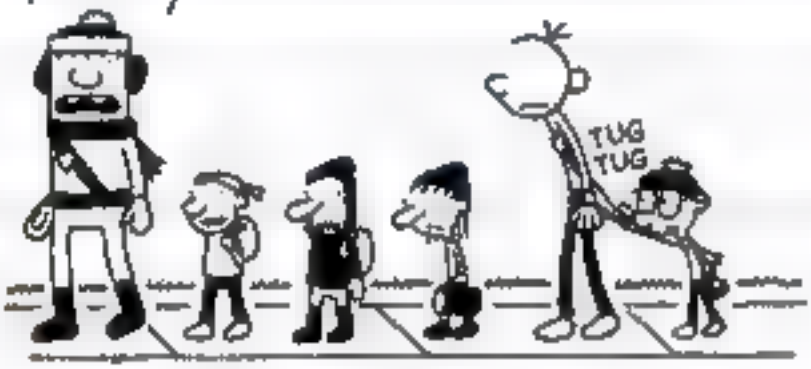
And sure enough, when I walked into Botany at 9:10 on the dot, Mr. Peters didn't even look up from his notes.

I was even able to stay awake for most of Mr. Peters' class, mostly because of the caffeine from the three cups of hot chocolate I had.

I'm telling you, this safety patrol thing is a sweet deal.

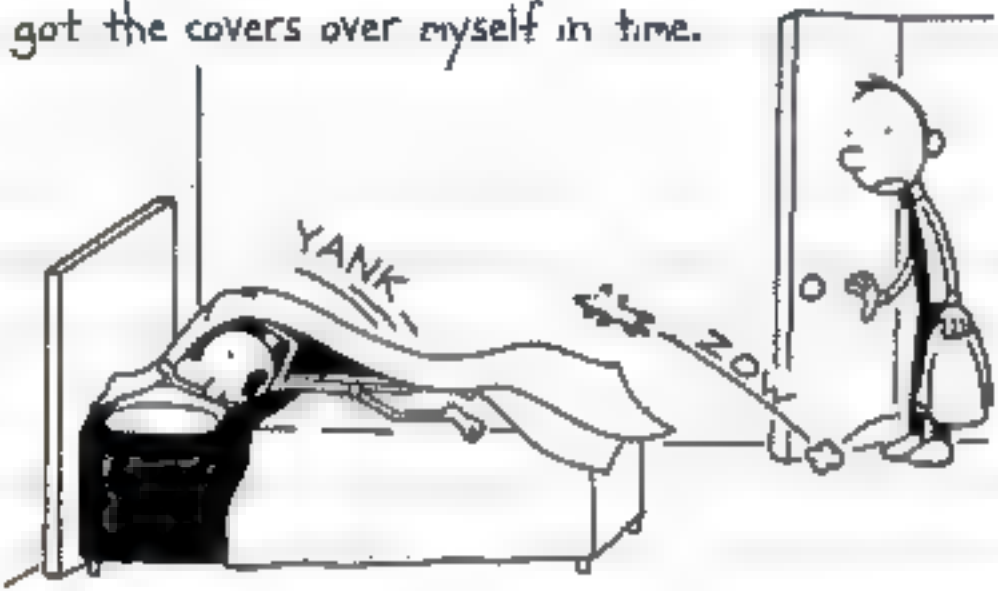
At 12:15, me and Rowley left school and picked up the morning kindergarteners to walk them to their houses. The whole trip ate up 45 minutes of school time, and there was only 15 minutes of French left when we got back.

Walking the kids home was no sweat, but I do have one complaint. One of the kindergarteners started to smell a little funny, and I think he may have had an accident. When he tried to let me know about it, I just stared straight ahead and acted like I didn't notice him. I'll walk these kids home, but believe me, I didn't sign up for any diaper duty.



Thursday, February 3rd

I'm starting to seriously think about not letting Sweetie sleep in my bed anymore. Dad takes the dog out to go to the bathroom at around 6:00 in the morning and then lets him back in my room, and Sweetie makes a beeline for my bed. After being out in the freezing cold, he just wants to get under my covers to warm back up. So I have to seal myself up under my blankets or I'll have a cold, wet dog all over me. And today, I barely got the covers over myself in time.



Then, Sweetie digs at my blankets and tries to find a way in. After a while he eventually gives up, but with all his whimpering and shivering, it's impossible to fall back asleep.

Today, me and Rowley's patrol scam took a hit. Madame Lefrere, our French teacher, complained to Mr. Winsky that it didn't take two patrols to walk the kindergarteners home. I guess Mr. Winsky saw it her way because he said that from now on, me and Rowley have to walk the kids home on alternate days.

Rowley volunteered himself to take the first shift before I even had a chance to speak up. So I was stuck at school for a full hour of French class while Rowley got to frolick outside.

We spent the whole class filling out forms to pick pen pals for ourselves. I'm sure Madame Lefrere wanted us to pick out French pen pals, but she never specifically said that. So while all the other guys in my class were picking 13-year-old French boys as their pen pals, I checked off the boxes for a 17-year-old girl from the Netherlands. I can't wait to get my first letter.

I like the sunshiny days & ice cream. You too do? ♡

Madame Lefrere made me fill out Rowley's form, too, since he wasn't there. All I can say is that if Rowley wasn't so greedy about grabbing up the first shift today, maybe he could have ended up with a pen pal like mine.

Friday, February 4th

When Dad came to take Sweetie out this morning, Sweetie was asleep on my pillow. Dad tried to get Sweetie to wake up, but Sweetie wouldn't budge. I guess he finally figured out that it was a lot better to be in a warm bed than outside in the cold at 6:00 in the morning. So Dad tried to get Sweetie moving by turning the lights on and off.

After three or four minutes of that, Dad finally left my room. I was glad because I thought I was finally going to be able to go back to sleep.

But Dad had another trick up his sleeve. If there's one thing that's guaranteed to make Sweetie go bananas, it's the doorbell. So Dad went downstairs and rang the doorbell, and Sweetie took off for the front door at about a hundred miles an hour.

I just wish Dad had given me some warning so I could have avoided having Sweetie use my face as a launching pad.

At school today, it was my turn to walk the kindergarteners home. When I got back to school, there were only about five minutes left in French class, and Madame Lefrere was pretty steamed that I was so late. I admit that I was horsing around with the kids today and I took my time getting back, but it's not like I missed anything in class. Everyone was just writing their first letters to their new pen pals.

Unfortunately, Madame Lefrere looked over the forms and saw that I picked a 17-year-old girl from the Netherlands to be my pen pal, so she switched it to be a French boy who is my age.

So my new pen pal is named Mamadou SaintPierre. Madame Lefrere made me stay after class to write my letter to Mamadou so she could drop it in the mail with all the others.

I know I'm supposed to write in French and Mamadou is supposed to write in English so we can practice, but to be honest with you, trying to write in a foreign language is not so easy. And I don't see any need for both of us to be stressed out over this whole pen pal thing.

February 4th

Dear Mamadou,

First of all, let me say that I think it would be easiest if we both just write in English.

Saturday, February 5th

Believe it or not, I'm through with winter swim team! Somehow I was able to talk Dad into letting me quit.

Tonight at dinner, I complained that night swim practice has been making me so tired that I'm having a hard time living up to my full potential as a safety patrol during the day.

I come up with some lame excuse every week to try and get Dad to let me quit swim team, and this may have been my lamest excuse yet. But for some reason, tonight, he caved in. So no more swim team for me.

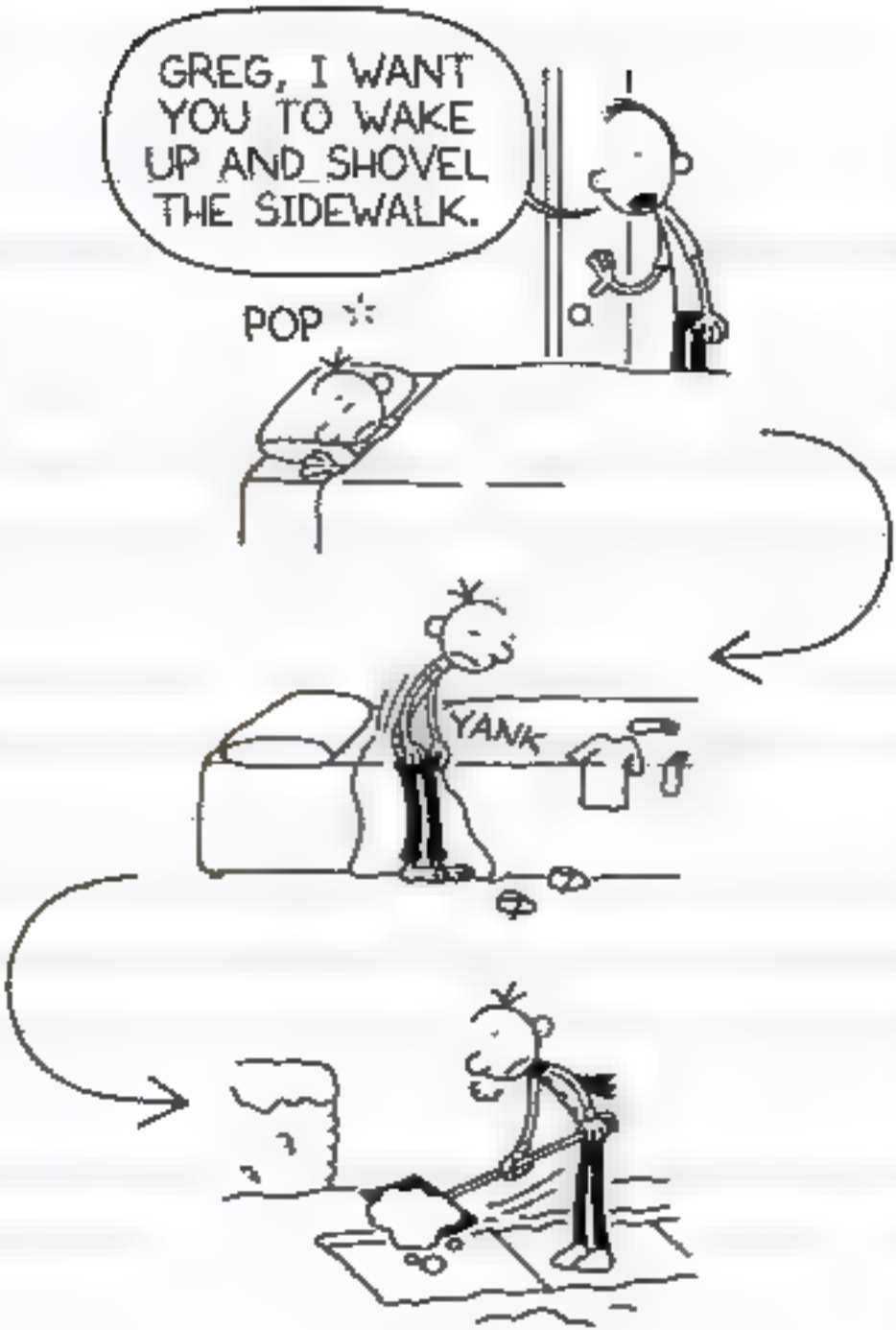
I'm guessing the reason Dad finally let me quit is because he's sick of driving me to and from the pool every Thursday and Friday night. Rowley quit a long time ago because the chlorine was giving him rashes, so Rowley's dad dropped out of the carpool. And Mom just started taking a new exercise class at night, so there went Dad's backup driver.

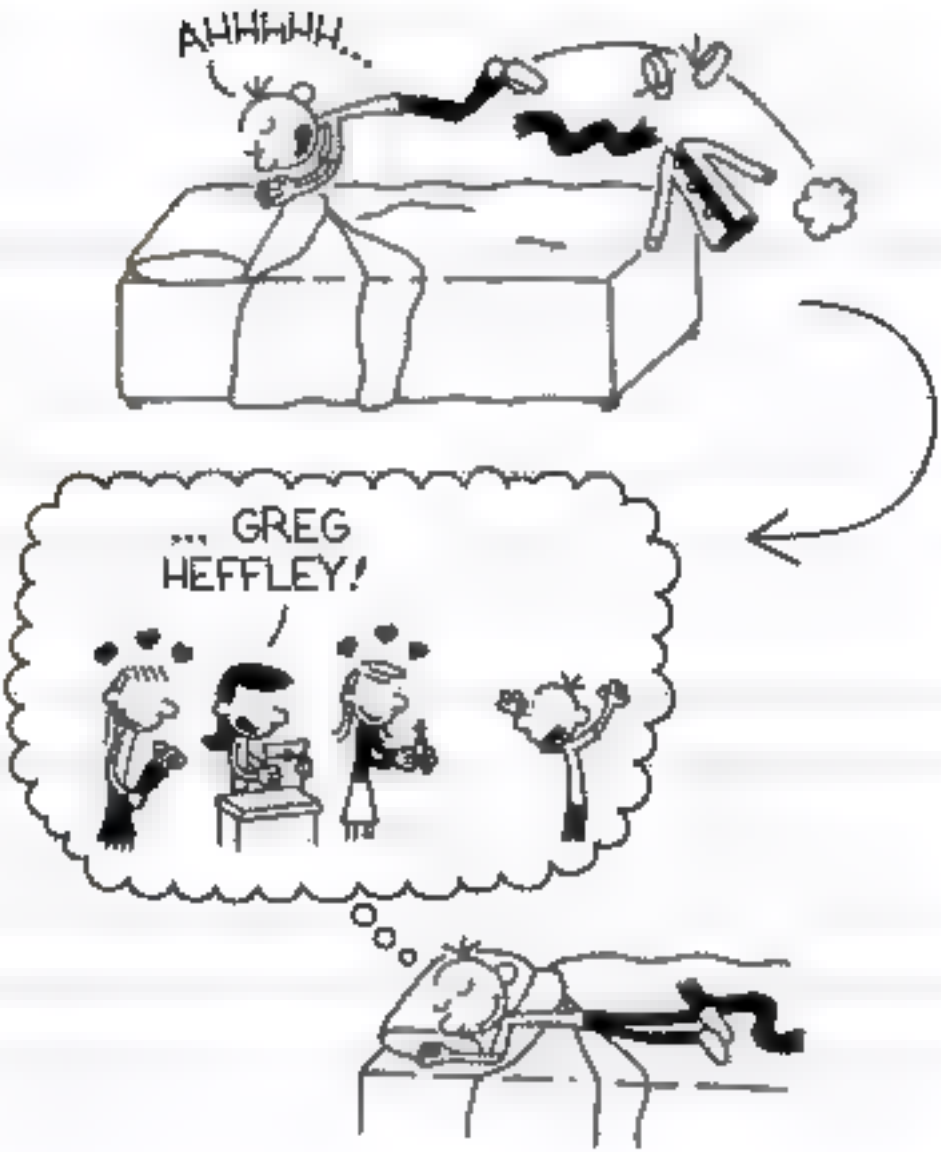
It might just be that Dad has completely given up on me ever since Bishop Garrigan fell through. In any case, I'm just glad he's off my back and I can go back to doing the things I like to do.

The first thing I'm going to do is start catching up on all the sleep I lost over the past month. I started off on the right foot by sleeping for a total of 14 hours between yesterday and today.

Man, I love to sleep. You know how some people wake up in the middle of the night and can't get back to sleep? Well, not me.

I could get woken up in the middle of a dream, go back to sleep, and pick up where I left off. And that's exactly what happened today.

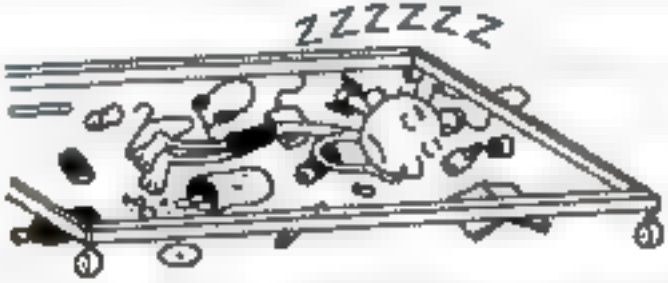

GREG, I WANT YOU TO WAKE UP AND SHOVEL THE SIDEWALK.
POP
YANK


AHHHHH...
... GREG HEFFLEY!

Sunday, February 6th

Remember yesterday how I said I love to sleep? Well, I've got nothing on Rodrick.

Today, Mom was having Rodrick's old mattress replaced. Before the furniture guys showed up with the new mattress, Dad dragged Rodrick's old mattress out to the curb. Rodrick could could have just gotten up for the day when Dad took away his old mattress, but instead, Rodrick went right back to sleep on the floor, in the middle of his bed frame.



Now THAT's dedication.

I think Rodrick's world record for sleeping was when he slept for 36 hours straight last October. He slept all the way from Sunday night to Tuesday morning, and didn't even realize he had skipped a whole day of his life until Tuesday night.

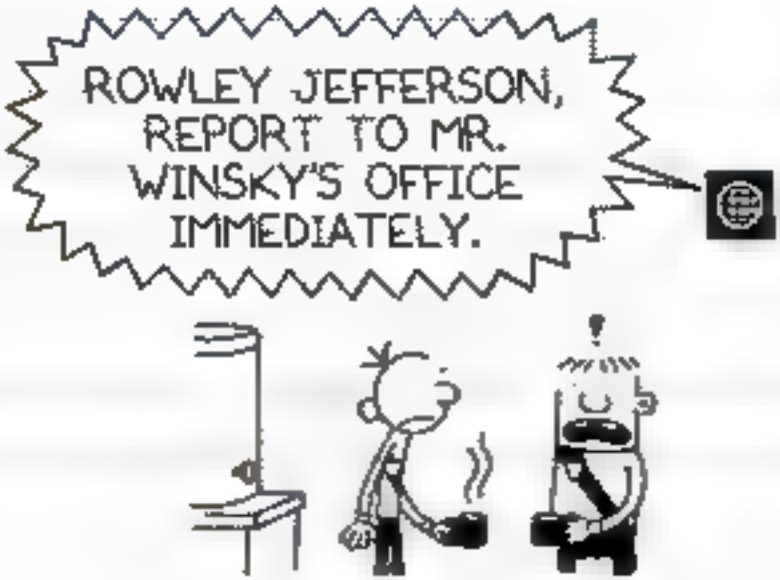
Speaking of sleep, I woke up a whole lot earlier than I planned to today. Dad took Sweetie out to go to the bathroom this morning and then let him back in my room, like he always does. But there was snow on the ground, so when Sweetie came inside he was soaking wet.

Sweetie was pretty desperate to get into my warm bed. I sealed myself up under my covers, but Sweetie kept digging around the edges to find a way in. I was only wearing underwear, so I did everything I could to make sure he stayed out. But he must have found a hole at the end of the bed, because he found his way in.

You know how people who have suffered traumatic experiences are never the same again? Well, after this experience with Sweetie and the episode at Grandpa's last week, I think it's safe to say that I'm scarred for life.

Monday, February 7th

Before school started today, me and Rowley were enjoying our hot chocolate in the cafeteria when an announcement came over the loudspeaker.



I was just glad it wasn't my name on the intercom for once. But Rowley was as white as a ghost.

Rowley marched down the hall to Mr. Winsky's office like he was facing his execution.

When Rowley came back 10 minutes later, he was shaking all over. Apparently, Mr. Winsky chewed him out for "behavior unbecoming a safety patrol," which basically meant Rowley had done something really bad.

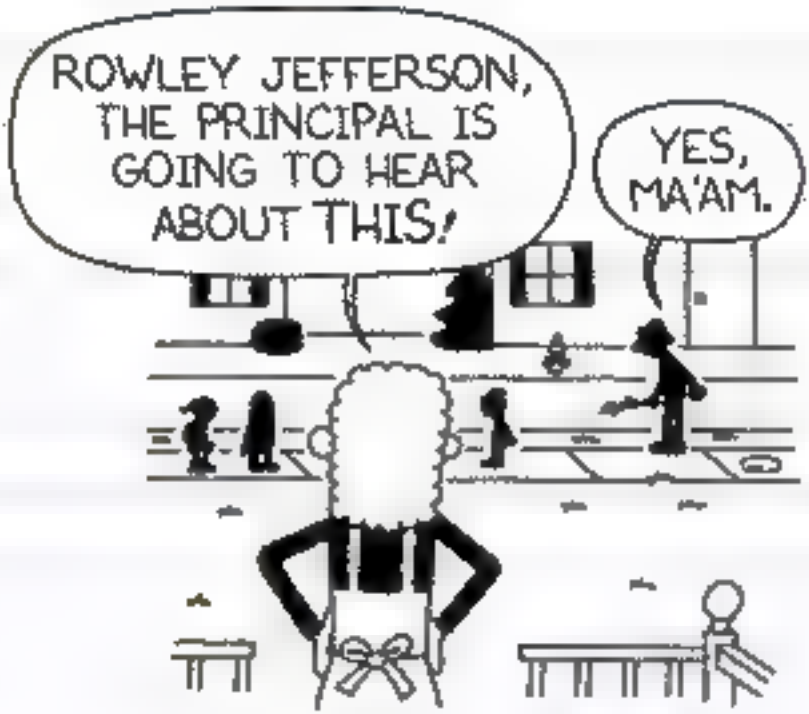
Rowley told me he didn't know what Mr. Winsky was talking about. Rowley said Mr. Winsky had received a call from a parent who had witnessed Rowley "terrorizing" the kindergarteners last week when he was supposed to be walking them home from school. But Rowley said he couldn't remember doing anything wrong at all.

As soon as Rowley said the word "kindergarteners," I knew exactly what this was all about. Remember on Friday how I said I was horsing around with the kids during my shift?

Well, it had rained that day, and there were a lot of worms out. So I picked one up on a stick and had a little fun with the kids.

I think the kids got a big kick out of it. But when we rounded the corner to Moody Street, a woman opened up her door and yelled out at me.

It was Mrs. Irvine, who is a friend of Rowley's mom. I had spilled hot chocolate all over my coat that morning, so I was borrowing Rowley's orange jacket and his hat. Mrs. Irvine must have thought I was Rowley, and I wasn't about to correct her.



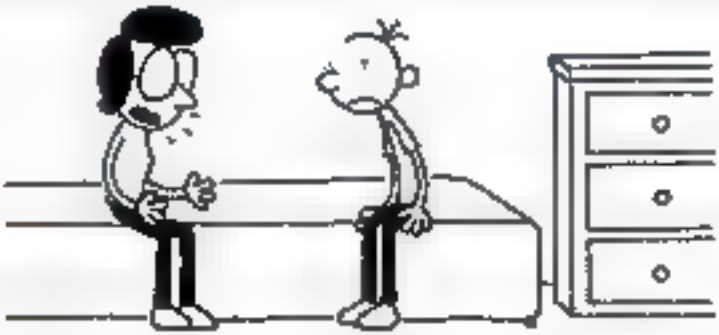
I forgot all about the whole incident until this morning.

Anyway, Rowley was obviously getting pegged for something I did. Mr. Winsky told Rowley that he was going to have to apologize to the kindergarteners tomorrow morning, and that he was suspended from patrols for one week. Rowley told Mr. Winsky he still didn't know what he did wrong, but that just made Mr. Winsky madder.

I knew I should probably tell Rowley what was going on and then turn myself in, but I wasn't ready to set the record straight just yet. The apology part didn't really phase me, but the thought of losing my hot chocolate privileges for one week was enough to make me think twice.

So I kept my mouth shut, at least for now. I figured I'd give it a day to think about it.

At dinner tonight, Mom could tell something was bothering me. So later on, she came up to my room to to ask me what was wrong. I told her I had a big decision to make, and I didn't know what to do. I got to give Mom credit for how she handled it. For once, she didn't pry and try to get all the details, like I thought she would. She just said that whatever the decision was that I had to make, I should try to do the right thing, because it's our choices that define who we are.



I figure that's pretty decent advice. But as of right now, I'm still not 100% sure how I'm going to handle this situation tomorrow.

Tuesday, February 8th

When I got to school today, I still hadn't decided what to do about my dilemma. In home room, I was really thinking about spilling the beans and letting Rowley off the hook. But before I could speak up, Mr. Winsky marched Rowley down to the kindergarteners' room to make him apologize, and things sort of just played themselves out from there.

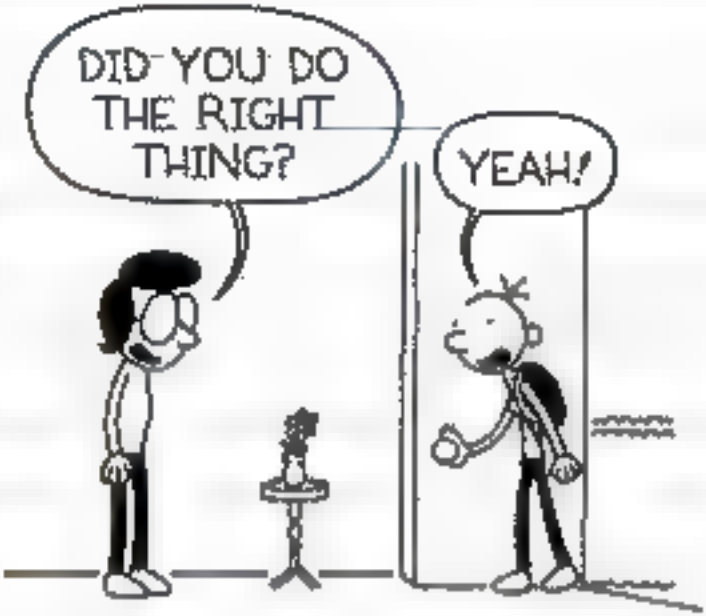
All in all, it was probably best for Rowley to just take one for the team this time around.

I've been in trouble a few times already this year, but this is Rowley's first time. If he can keep his nose clean from now on, he doesn't have anything to worry about. Plus, I don't think I could have made it through my mornings without my hot chocolate. So in a way, this is a win/win situation.

On the walk home today, I came clean with Rowley and told him the whole truth about what happened. I told him I had learned my lesson about being more careful about what I do in front of Mrs. Irvine's house, and that he had learned a valuable lesson, too, which is this: Be careful about who you lend your coat to.

Rowley didn't seem all that receptive to my message. We were supposed to play Dungeons and Dragons over at Leland's house today, but Rowley told me he wasn't in the mood and he went home instead.

Mom was home from work early, and she was waiting for me at the front door. I think she was pretty eager to see how I handled my dilemma.

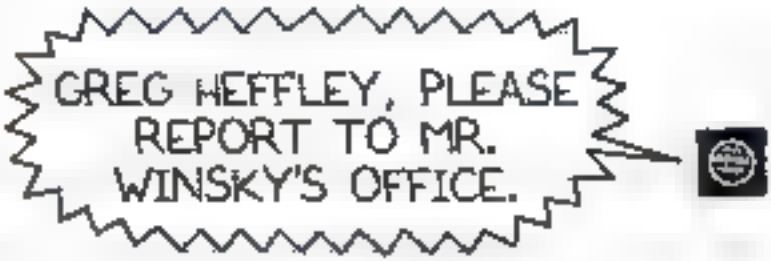


After dinner tonight, Mom took me out for ice cream as a special treat.

And I have to say, after this whole episode, I'm going to start going to Mom for advice more often.

Wednesday, February 9th

This morning, I was enjoying my hot chocolate in the cafeteria when an announcement came over the loudspeaker.



I can't say I didn't see it coming. I knew it was just a matter of time before I got busted for what I did last week. I took a few extra minutes to enjoy my drink before heading down to Mr. Winsky's office, because I figured it would be my last hot chocolate for a while.

Mr. Winsky sat me down and told me he had received an "anonymous tip" that I was the real culprit in the worm-chasing incident. Then he gave me the same speech he gave Rowley about "respecting the badge" and all of that.

Since I got the same speech Rowley got, I figured I'd get the same punishment. But Mr. Winsky said that since I let someone else take the heat for something I did, he was suspending me from patrols "indefinitely." I had to look that word up later on, and I found out it basically means "for good."

I'm sure the "anonymous tip" either came from Rowley or his parents. All I can say is, if Rowley ratted me out, then he has to live with himself for being such a crummy friend.

Later on in the day, Rowley got called down to Mr. Winsky's office again, and Mr. Winsky reinstated him as a patrol. And get this: he gave Rowley a PROMOTION for "exhibiting courage under false suspicion."

So now Rowley is a Junior Captain on the patrols, and I'm back to being a regular civilian.

I thought about giving Rowley the cold shoulder for a few days to teach him a lesson about loyalty, but then I realized something.

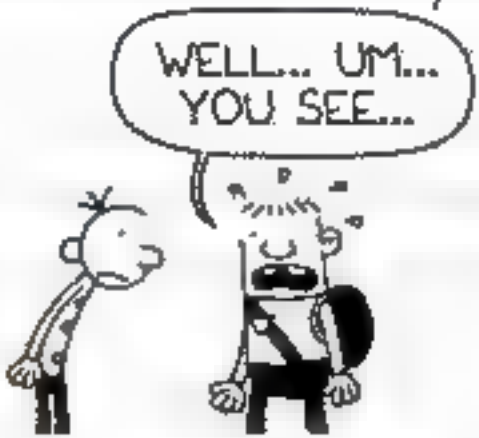
In June, all the officers in the safety patrols get treated to a trip to Six Flags, and they get to take along one friend. So I wanted to make sure Rowley knew that I was his guy.

Thursday, February 10th

Like I said before, the worst part of getting kicked off patrols was having my hot chocolate privileges suspended. So this morning, I went to the back door of the cafeteria. I figured I could get Rowley to hook me up. But either he has gone deaf or he was too busy kissing the Senior Captain's butt to notice me at the window.

On the walk home from school today, I brought up the subject of Dungeons and Dragons to Rowley. It's been a while since we last played, so I was telling Rowley we should go over to Leland's house and start things back up.

As soon as I mentioned Dungeons and Dragons, Rowley started acting all funny. It took Rowley forever to spit out what he was trying to say.



It turns out that Rowley has been playing Dungeons and Dragons with Leland BEHIND MY BACK for the past two days. And since I haven't been there, he's been using MY characters.

But that's not even the worst part. Yesterday, during the game, Rowley found a big treasure chest, and he had to decide if he wanted to try and open it.

Well, Rowley was afraid the treasure chest might be booby trapped. So guess what he did? He made MY characters open the treasure chest while HIS characters hid behind a wall.

And wouldn't you know it? The treasure chest WAS booby trapped, and my knight and wizard that I spent a whole month developing got plugged full of arrows.

Rowley told me he was planning on going over to Leland's today to play, but since I didn't have any characters left, he didn't really know what I would do.

I was mad already, but that last comment sent me over the edge. I went after Rowley, and I chased him all the way from Melcher Street to the top of Prestwick.

But right when I was about to catch Rowley, I slipped on a patch of ice.

I lost my balance, and I barely caught myself from falling into a gigantic slush puddle in the ditch next to the road. The problem was, my hands were on the bank, and my feet were in the road, and I needed help to get back upright.

Unfortunately, Rowley wasn't real eager to help me out. In fact, after standing there for a minute, he took off.

So I was left there by myself, stranded. After a few minutes, I decided I was going to have to shimmy sideways all the way to the corner of the street where I could stand up straight, but it was going to take forever.

Right about then, I heard footsteps across the street, and I called out for help. Somebody walked over to where I was, and when I looked behind me, I saw my worst nightmare.

It was Kenny Keith, fresh out of two weeks of detention that I was personally responsible for giving him.

Kenny was with a bunch of his thugs. They all just stood there looking at me for a minute. I'm sure Kenny couldn't believe his luck finding me like that.

I wasn't sure what was taking Kenny so long. I figured he would just take his revenge out on me, and that would be that. But I heard his friends whispering something, and I'm pretty sure I heard the word "expelled" in there. Then it hit me: these guys thought I was still a safety patrol.

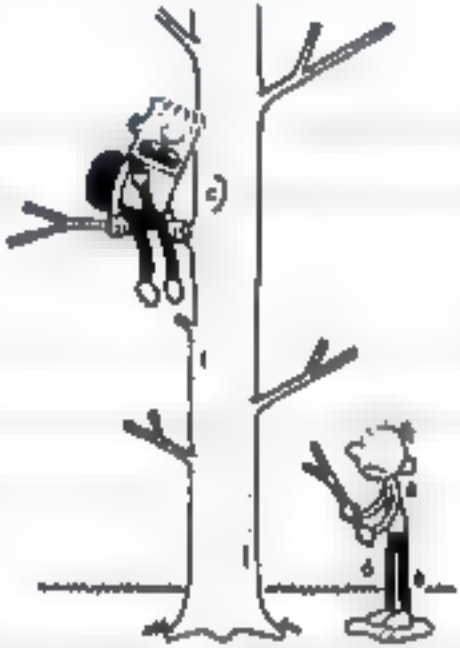
Everybody knows that if you attack a patrol, it can get you kicked out of school. And I wasn't about to let these guys know I got my badge taken away yesterday.

So that's what was making Kenny hesitate. Finally, Kenny told me he was going to help me up off of the bank. I thought that maybe there was some tiny bit of good in Kenny and that he was going to do the right thing for once in his life. But then he grabbed my feet instead of my waist, and the rest of me went straight down.

I guess I should consider myself lucky, because Kenny and his friends walked away and left me alone after that.

I ran all the way home, and believe it or not, I caught up with Rowley before he could make it to his front door. But he scooted up a tree before I could catch him.

I would have waited all night for Rowley to come down, but Mom called me home for dinner.



Rowley might have gotten away today, but he can't hide forever.

Friday, February 11th

Today at school everyone was talking about next week's Valentine's Day Dance. Me and Rowley had been planning on pooling our money together so we could rent a limo and arrive at the dance in style. But since me and Rowley are now ex-friends, I got Collin to go in on the limo with me instead.

So now it's going to be me and Collin making a big appearance instead of me and Rowley, and that's just fine with me.

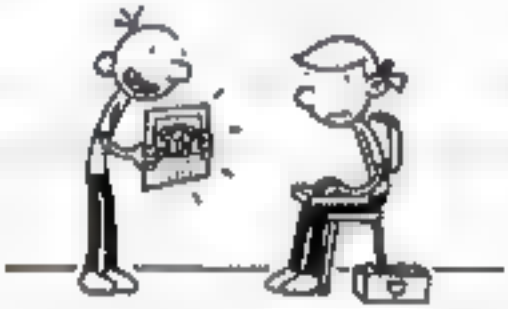
I went over to Collin's house after school, and we spent about an hour going through the Yellow Pages trying to pick out the right limo company. We talked to about ten different companies on Collin's speakerphone.

I'm totally fine with being a bachelor on Valentine's Day this year. I had the whole holiday ruined for me in 5th grade when my heart got stomped on by Natasha Joyce.

I had wanted to buy a dozen red roses for Natasha, who was the prettiest girl in my class. But Mom said giving a girl a dozen roses was "inappropriate" for a 5th-grader.

So I picked out a card for Natasha instead. But I made sure to buy the biggest Valentine's card I could find, so Natasha would get the picture that I felt something extra special for her.

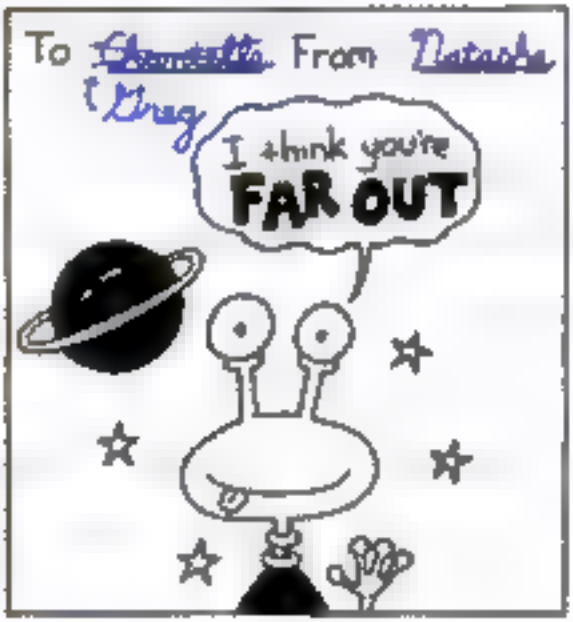
And when it came time to exchange Valentine's Day cards in school, I gave mine to Natasha.



Then, I waited for Natasha to give her Valentine's Day card to me. Natasha dug around through her undelivered cards, but she couldn't find the one she made for me.

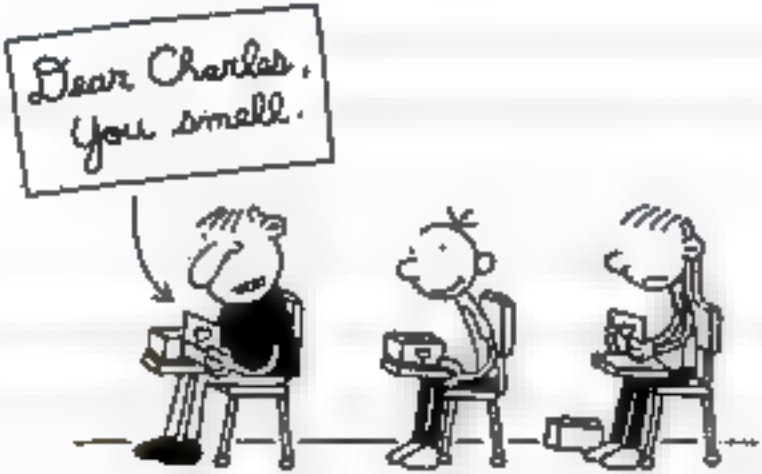
So she took a card that had Chantelle Miller's name on it. Chantelle was absent that day.

Then she wrote on it and handed it to me.



You can probably see why Valentine's Day is not my favorite holiday.

The next year, in sixth grade, I decided to take a different approach to my Valentine's cards. When I wrote out my cards that year, I told everyone in my class EXACTLY what I thought of them, but I didn't sign them.



Some kids complained to the teacher that someone was handing out nasty cards, and the teacher tried to find out who was sending them.

She went through everyone's cards to see who hadn't received a nasty Valentine. She figured the one person who didn't get a bad Valentine would be the culprit. But I figured something like that might happen, so I came prepared. The night before, I made sure to fill out a card for myself, too.

Luckily there's no Valentine's Day card exchange in middle school.

Anyway, back to this afternoon. Me and Collin found a limo company that we could afford, and we were just about to close the deal. But then the guy from the limo company said something that ruined everything.

I just hung up the phone. I know I don't have the deepest voice in the world, but give me a break. I hope that guy knows he just cost his company a good chunk of money.

Saturday, February 12th

Now that the Mom Bucks program is over, me and Rodrick have to do our weekend chores for free. But Rodrick has figured out that if you just play dumb, Dad will get frustrated and he'll do all your chores for you.

Not only are we not making any money off of our chores, but we're also getting our wallets drained by a new rule Mom came up with.

Mom has been on our case lately about saying curse words, especially around Manny. You really have to watch yourself, because that boy is like a parrot.

So Mom came up with a rule where if you say a bad word around Manny, you have to pay money into the "Swear Jar."

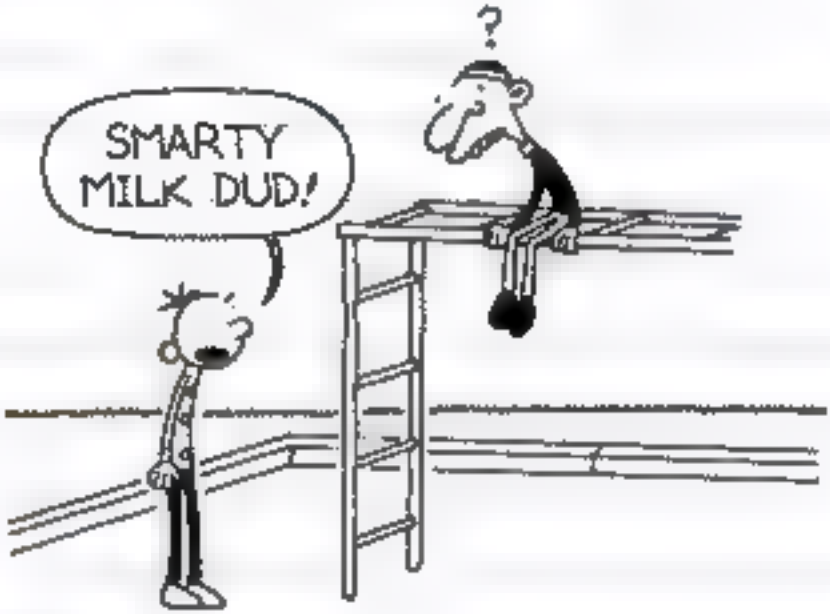
And get this: Manny gets to keep all the money in the Swear Jar for himself. Someone explain the logic of THAT one to me.

Between all the slip-ups by me, Rodrick, and Dad, I figure Manny already has enough money to pay for his college education.

It was pretty clear that if things kept up like this, me and Rodrick were going to go bankrupt. So we came up with a bunch of code words that mean the same thing as all the words we're not allowed to say. And so far, it's going right over Mom's head.

The problem is, I've gotten so used to our new code words that I use them outside the house, too.

Yesterday at recess, Nester Brill spit out a piece of gum, and it hit me in the head. I tried to give him an earful, but my words didn't really pack a whole lot of punch.



Sunday, February 13th

My school sent a flyer home to all the parents saying that this year, for Music Education, every kid is required to either sign up for the band or take private lessons.

I told Mom I didn't want to join the band, so she came up with a crazy idea. She said that Rodrick could give me private drum lessons.

Mom got the idea because lately, Rodrick has been going around saying he's a "professional drummer."

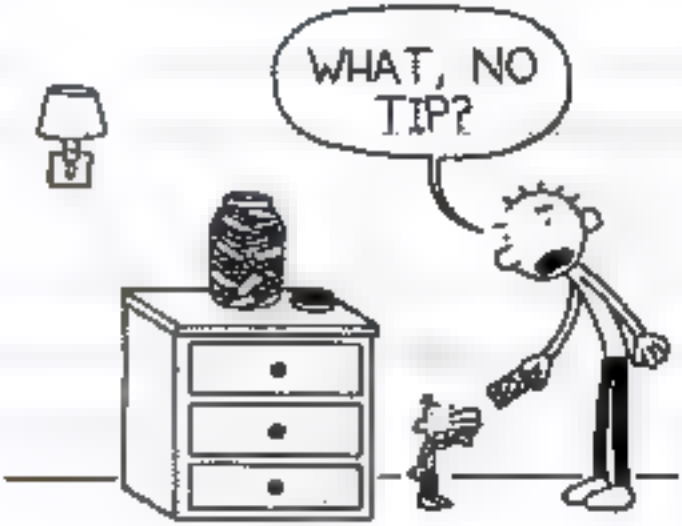
Rodrick got paid to do some drumming a few weeks back, and he said that once you get paid, you're officially a professional. There's this local show called the Community Follies where all the neighborhood parents do skits and stuff like that. The regular drummer got sick, so Rodrick filled in for two nights and got paid fourteen bucks.

I don't see how doing rim shots for a bunch of lame jokes at the community rec center makes you a professional musician, but that didn't stop me from trying to get some mileage out of it at school.

Anyway, Rodrick wasn't too hot on the idea of giving me drum lessons, even though Mom said she'd pay him ten bucks a pop. So Mom told him maybe I could get a bunch of my friends to take lessons, too, and that Rodrick could run a whole drum academy out of the basement.

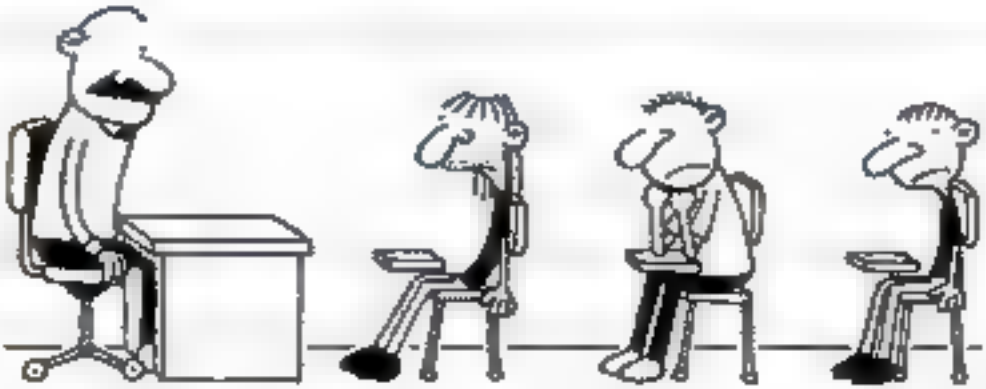
You could practically see the dollar signs in Rodrick's eyes when she mentioned that. So Rodrick agreed to do it.

The timing is good for Rodrick, because he's totally broke. I think he hit rock bottom yesterday when Manny hired him to clean his room.



Monday, February 14th

Well, today was the Valentine's Dance at my school, but it was NOTHING like I expected. First of all, it was in the middle of the day, not at night, like I thought it would be. Kids who didn't want to pay the two bucks admission to the dance could go to "study hall." But study hall was in Mr. Bertrand's room, and there was no talking allowed. So it didn't take a genius to figure out it was the same exact setup as detention.



I wish I had known how lame the dance was going to be, because I would have saved my two dollars and gone down to Mr. Bertrand's room instead.

At 1:30, everyone who paid for a ticket filed into the gym and sat down in the bleachers. Don't ask my why, but all the guys sat on one side of the gym and all the girls sat on the other side.

Once everyone was in the gym, they started the music. But whoever picked out the music must be seriously out of touch with what kids are listening to these days.

For the first 15 minutes, nobody moved a muscle.

There was zero atmosphere for a dance. There weren't any balloons or streamers or anything, so don't ask me where they spent our money. And all the lights were on, so that much pretty much killed the mood.

This one kid, Mitchell Sherman, stepped out onto the dance floor when "Supercalifragilistic" came on. Mitchell takes tapdancing lessons, and he walked to the middle of the floor and started tapping away. I don't know if he was trying to be funny, but I hope it was worth getting decked by some guys from the football team ten seconds into his routine.

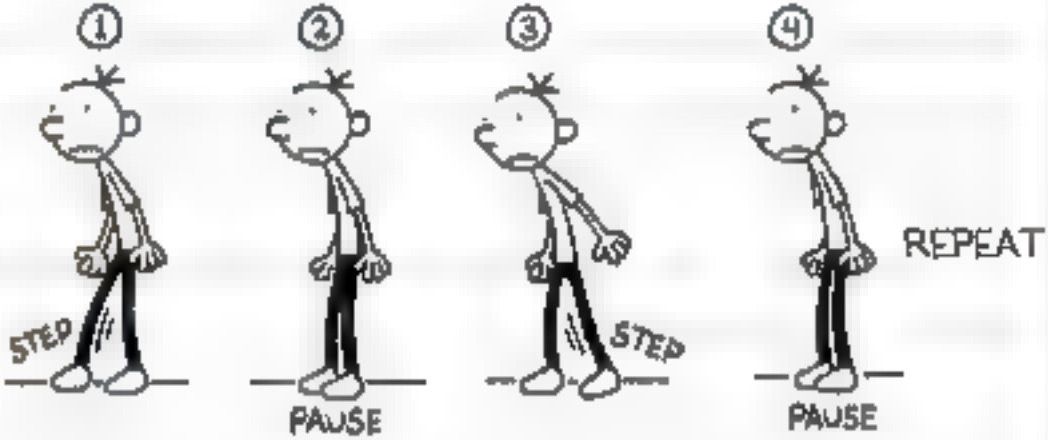
Ten minutes later, Mr. Phillips, the guidance counselor, and Ms. Flowers, the nurse, got out there and started dancing. I guess they thought they could get everyone else to join in if they started things up, but all it did was guarantee that everyone stayed in their seats.

Finally, Mrs. Mancy, the principal, had had enough. She walked up to the microphone and made an announcement. She said everyone in the stands was REQUIRED to come down and dance, and that it would be 50% of everyone's Phys Ed grade.

Me and a couple of other guys tried to sneak out to Mr. Bertrand's detention room, but we got caught by some teachers standing by the exits.

So we didn't have any choice but to dance. The principal wasn't kidding about the Phys Ed grading thing. She was walking around with Mr. Underwood, the P.E. teacher, and he had his clipboard with him.

I came up with a dance that was the bare minimum a person could do and still be technicaly considered dancing.

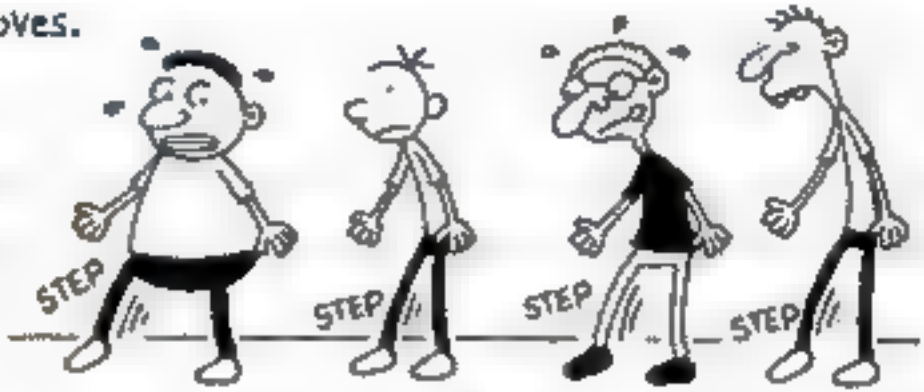


Mostly I just concentrated on not looking like a complete moron.

The girls all danced in a big pack in the middle of the gym. And they danced like professionals because they spend all their free time watching MTV.

A bunch of guys who were worried about their P.E. grade saw me doing my steps in the corner of the gym, and they came over to where I was.

I guess they must have thought I knew what I was doing, because the next thing I knew, I was surrounded by a bunch of goobers stealing my moves.



Mrs. Mancy and Mr. Underwood were heading my way, so I just did my best to focus on my steps so I could come out of this situation with a passing grade.

But right when they got to me, I heard something from my right-hand side that totally blew my concentration.

It was Fregly! Like I said before, Fregly is home-schooled, so I have no idea how he got in there. I know that his mom sometimes brings him to the school for general assemblies and parties so he can "mix and mingle."

But if I fail Phys Ed because of that kid, I can guarantee you that his house is going to get egged.

Tuesday, February 15th

Today was the first day of drum lessons with Rodrick. I talked Collin into taking lessons with me, even though I had to kind of stretch the truth to get him to sign up.

Collin really wants to learn how to play the cymbals, like the kind they use in marching bands.

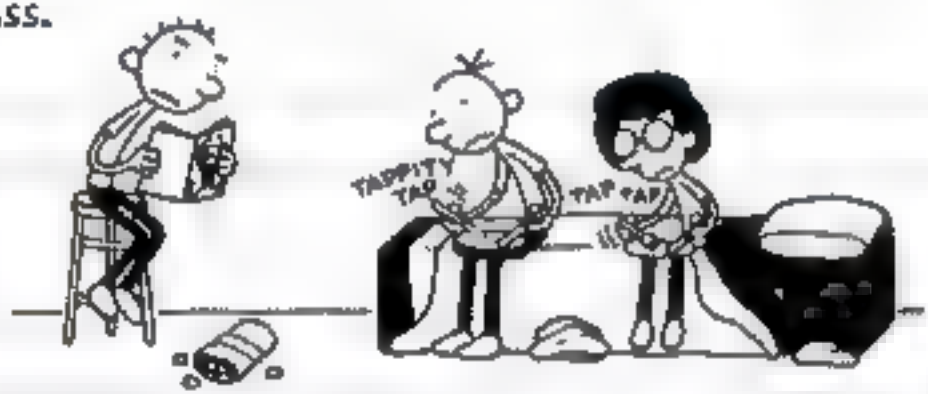
I told Collin I knew for a fact that Rodrick would be covering cymbals in week four, and Collin was pretty excited about that. I'm just glad I'm not going to have to take lessons all by myself.

Normally, I would have gotten Rowley to join me in this sort of thing, but I'm still mad at him.

I think Rowley wants to be friends again, because yesterday, he gave me a Valentine's card. Actually, it was just a piece of construction paper with one of those candy hearts taped to it.

I don't know what it was supposed to mean, but if Rowley thinks this is the way he's going to win me over, he's got to be out of his mind.

Collin came over at 4:00 today , and we went down to Rodrick's room to start our lesson. Rodrick got us started with some pretty basic drum drills. There was only one practice pad and two drumsticks, so Collin had to use a paper plate and some plastic utensils. But I guess that's what happens when you're the last one to sign up for a class.



Every once in a while, Rodrick would look up from his magazine and tell us what we were doing wrong. I was doing OK, but Collin's plastic fork broke halfway into the lesson and he had to just use his spoon.

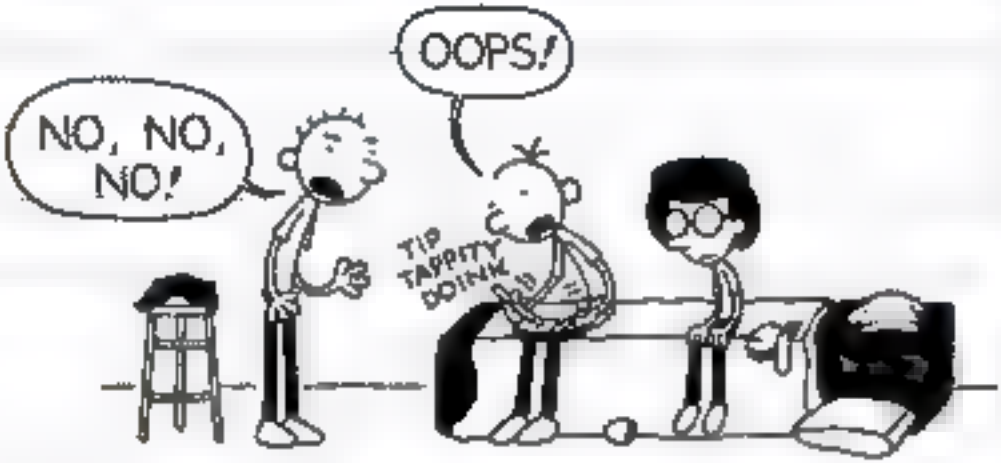
After about 15 minutes, Rodrick got a call from his friend, Ward, and that put an end to our first lesson.

Mom was surprised to see me and Collin upstairs so soon. So she sent us back downstairs and told us to make Rodrick at least give us a practice assignment.

Wednesday, February 16th

Me and Collin had drum lessons again today. We took turns with the practice pad since Collin's paper plate and spoon deal wasn't working out.

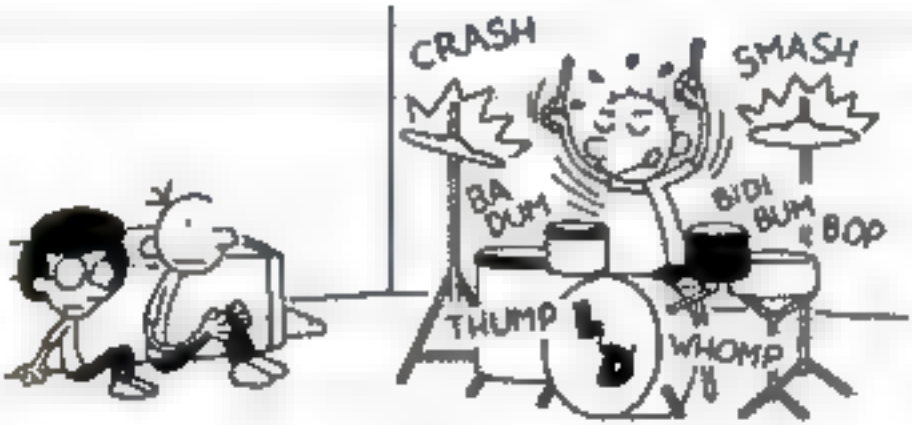
Rodrick might be a good drummer, but he's not a good teacher. Me and Collin tried our best to do the drills the way Rodrick told us to, but every time we messed up, Rodrick would get really frustrated.



Eventually, Rodrick got so fed up that he took our drumsticks away.

I think Rodrick realized that teaching us how to drum was hopeless, because halfway through the lesson, Rodrick sat down at his drum set and told us to just "watch and learn"

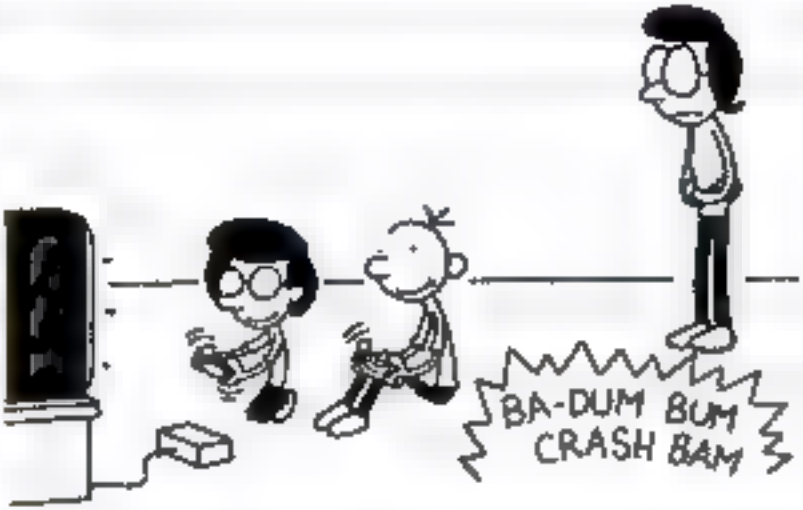
Rodrick started into this really long drum solo that had nothing to do with the drills he had been teaching us.



The drum solo went on so long and Rodrick was so into it that he didn't even notice when me and Collin left and walked upstairs.

Don't think I'm complaining, though. I'm sure if I was taking private music lessons from anyone else, I wouldn't be able to get up and leave right in the middle of the class.

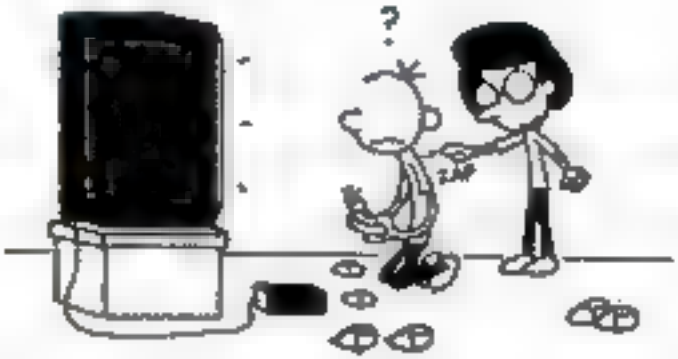
This way, Rodrick gets to do what he wants to do, and me and Collin get to do what we want to do. The way I see it, everyone is happy.



Thursday, February 17th

Today was our third drum lesson, but this time, Rodrick didn't even pretend to try and teach us anything. Rodrick just played at his drum set with his headphones on, and me and Collin went upstairs to play video games.

One of my controllers is broken, so we took turns playing. During one of my turns, Collin built up some static electricity by walking around the carpet in his socks, and he gave me a little shock.



It didn't really hurt, but it kind of made me mess up in my game.

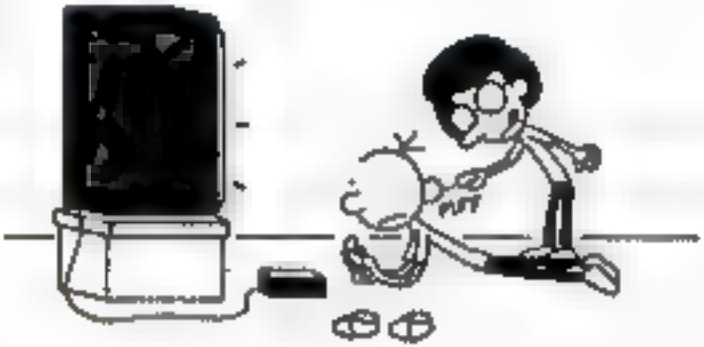
So when it was Collin's turn to play, I decided to give him a little payback. I rubbed my feet on the carpet for a long time like I was building up a huge electric charge.

But I had picked up one of those big fat rubber bands, and I gave Collin a wicked snap on the back of his leg.

I hid the rubber band, and Collin actually believed that I had shocked him. So during my next turn, Collin spent about five minutes trying to build up the biggest charge he could.

Collin must have walked around the room 50 times.

When he decided he had a big enough charge built up, Collin gave me another shock, but it was no big deal.



He got really frustrated, and he tried to build up another charge, but his next shock was even wimpier than the last one. I don't know if his socks were getting sweaty or if there was just no more static electricity left in the carpet, but each time he shocked me, it got lamer and lamer.

When it was Collin's turn to play again, I gave him another smack with my rubber band. We went back and forth like this for a while, and Collin never figured out my trick.

Eventually, Collin got up to use the bathroom. I guess he must have seen the red marks on the back of his leg while he was in there, and the next thing I knew, he ran upstairs to tattle on me.

It took me a few minutes to explain to Mom that I didn't actually burn Collin with electric shocks, and that I just smacked him with a rubber band. But that didn't seem to make her any less mad.

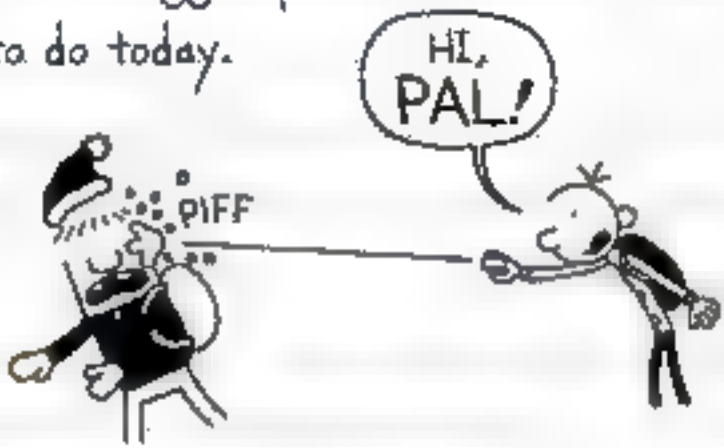
And Mom really didn't seem too thrilled when I demonstrated my technique by giving Collin another snap on the back of the legs. Mom sent Collin home and sent me to my room.

Man, this kind of episode is almost enough to make me miss Rowley. Rowley might be a lot of things, but one thing he's not is a snitch.

I thought about calling him up today, but I'm still pretty hot at him for the puddle incident.

Friday, February 18th

I finally let Rowley off the hook for all the things he did to me last week. Mom is always saying that when you get in a fight, you should try to "be the bigger person," so that's what I decided to do today.



I have to admit the main reason I decided to forgive Rowley is because I have a birthday coming up, and I didn't want to miss out on getting a gift from him. My actual birthday isn't till Wednesday, but we're having my party tomorrow. So I figured I'd better give Rowley at least 24 hours' advance warning so he could get some shopping done.

I never get good gifts for my birthday. So last year, I just asked for money, and then I spent it all on stuff from those mail-order ads you see in the back of comic books.

I'll tell you, they need to set up laws to protect kids from the lies they tell in those stupid ads, because every single thing I ordered was a bust.

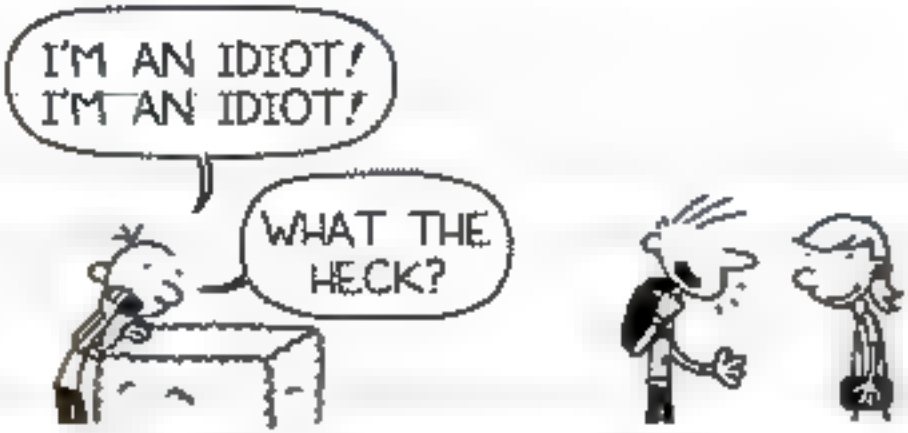
The first thing I got in the mail was x-ray goggles, which I figured would make school a whole lot more interesting. It took about two months for them to show up in my mailbox, and when they finally came, I couldn't wait to try them out.

But the secret behind those x-ray goggles is that they make you see cross-eyed, so it's like you have double vision.

The people who make those things must think kids are dumb enough to think seeing double is the same as having x-ray vision, but believe me, it's not.

Another thing I ordered was a book that was supposed to teach me how to throw my voice. I figured that was a talent that could really come in handy.

When I got the book, I read it cover to cover. I did everything they said to do, but I found out the hard way that the book was a sham, too.



But my biggest disappointment was for the thing I spent the most money on.

I sent away $50 for blueprints that were supposed to tell me how to build a "personal hovercraft," and I figured my life was going to be changed for good.

I'll never know for sure if those blueprints were for real or not, because when I finally got them, I couldn't get past the first step.

Step 1 Acquire an industrial twin turbine hovercraft engine

Saturday, February 19th

My birthday party was today, and it started off with a shocker. Grandpa was the one in the family to arrive, and he showed up with a date.

"Lady friend" are just old-people code words for "girlfriend."

I'm not so sure I'm ready for Grandpa to be dating, and from the look on Dad's face, he's not ready, either. Besides, I think Maurlene is about 20 years younger than Grandpa.

Mom sent me to the kitchen to fetch some tea, and she told Rodrick to hang up Maurlene's coat. I'm not going to pass any judgment on Maurlene right away, but I don't think she made such a great first impression on Rodrick.

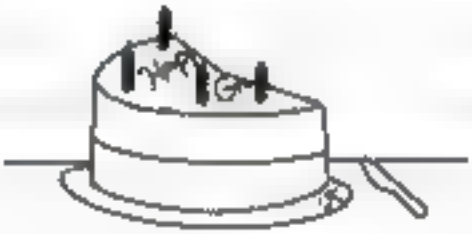
Grandpa told us he met Maurlene when she served him egg salad as a cafeteria lady at his retirement community, and I guess they've been an item ever since. Luckily, halfway through Grandpa's story, other people started to show up at the house, so we didn't have to hear the whole play-by-play of Grandpa and Maurlene's romance.

We had spaghetti and meatballs for dinner, which is my favorite meal. Mom sat next to Maurlene and did her best to make conversation, but Maurlene didn't score any points with some of the comments she made.

Mom had bought a mint chocolate chip ice cream cake from Baskin Robbins, and after dinner, I was pretty eager to eat the cake and start opening presents. But what I saw when I walked in the dining room stopped me in my tracks.

Somehow Sweetie had gotten up on the dining room table, and he was chowing down on my birthday cake.

I chased Sweetie off the table and got Mom. I figured she'd go out and get me a new cake, but instead, she just took a knife and cut away the part of the cake Sweetie had slobbered all over.



I really wasn't in the mood for cake anymore, especially with Sweetie throwing up little birthday candles under the dining room table.

Everyone sat down in the dining room, and Mom dimmed the lights and lit the candles that were still on the cake. Everyone sang Happy Birthday except Grandpa and Maurlene, who were smooching like a couple of teenagers.

Luckily the lights stayed on for good after that, but I think by then, everyone's appetite was ruined.

Next up was gifts. I like to get the cards out of the way first so I can unwrap my presents without any distractions. The way I used to do it was to open each card and shake it so that if there was money in it, it would fall out.

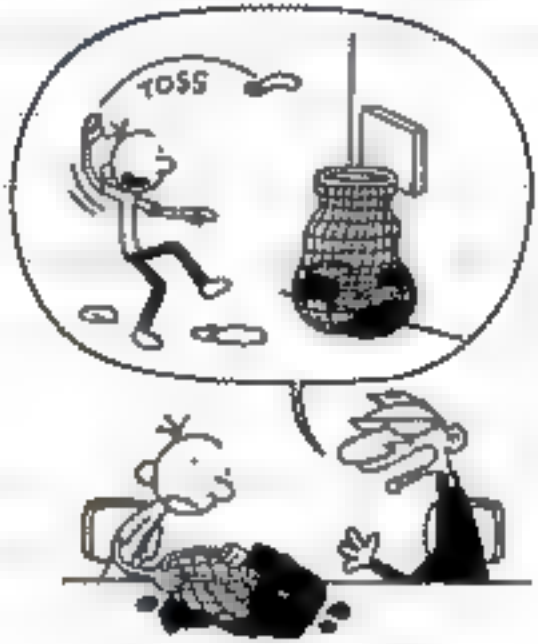
It used to take me about two minutes to get through the whole stack of cards. But Mom said I was being "rude," and now I have to read each card out loud, no matter how dopey the poem is that's written on it.

To a Wonderful Nephew -

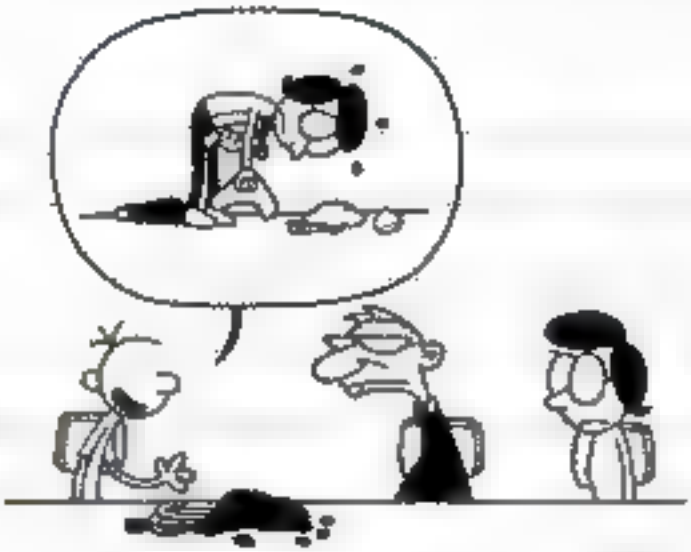
A birthday greeting
And a "how do you do?"
To a darling dear boy,
My nephew (that's you!)

After I got through the cards, I moved on to the presents. Most of my gifts were pretty lame, like clothes and books and stuff. I saved Uncle Freddie's gift for last, because I can always count on him for a big ticket item. But when I opened his gift, I couldn't figure out what it was.

Uncle Freddie told me his gift was a "laundry hoop" for my room, and it was supposed to make putting my dirty clothes away "fun."



I had to explain to Uncle Freddie that we Heffley boys don't do our own laundry. We just throw our clothes on the floor, and Mom takes care of things from there. I told Uncle Freddie that he could just give me the gift receipt and I would exchange the laundry hoop for something I would actually use.



But Mom stepped in and nixed my plan. She told Uncle Freddie that his gift was an "excellent" idea.

Then she said that it was high time I learned to do my own laundry, and she said that she would be buying a laundry hoop for Rodrick, too.

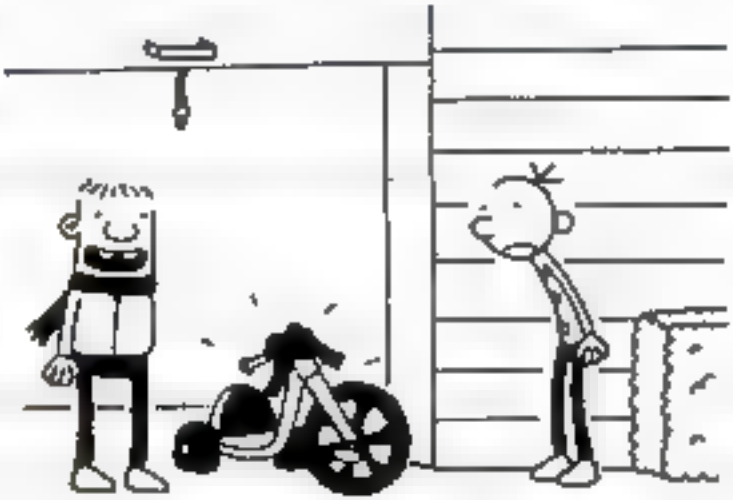
Rodrick gave me a kick under the table, which by the way was the only thing I got from Rodrick for my birthday.

I'm supposed to go up to Rowley's house later on to pick up my gift from him. He said I'm really going to like it.

I'll put it to you this way: if it's not the best gift I get this year, I'll be surprised. Because right now, the bar is pretty low.

Sunday, February 20th

I went up to Rowley's last night to see what he got me for my birthday. From the way Rowley hyped his present, I half expected to find a wide-screen t.v. or a motorcycle waiting for me up at his house. But when Rowley opened up his garage door to show me my present, it was just a Big Wheel with a giant red bow on it.



I guess I would have thought a Big Wheel was a cool gift about five years ago. But you could get beat up for driving around on one of those things in our grade.

Anyway, Rowley was so enthusiastic about the Big Wheel that I tried to act like I thought it was a great gift. Hopefully, I can just sell it back to him in a week or two and use the cash to buy a new game controller.

We actually had some fun with the Big Wheel today. I came up with a game where one guy rides down the hill, and the other guy tries to knock him off of the Big Wheel with a football. Rowley was the first one to ride down the hill, and I tried to beat him.

It was actually a lot harder than I thought, and I missed the first couple of times. The only downside of the game is that it took Rowley a long time to walk the Big Wheel all the way back up the hill, so it was something like 15 minutes between throws. I stuck with the role of Thrower and Rowley was the Rider. Rowley tried to get me to be the Rider a couple of times, but I'm no fool. That Big Wheel hits about 35 miles an hour at top speed, and Rowley burned through the brakes on his first ride down the hill.

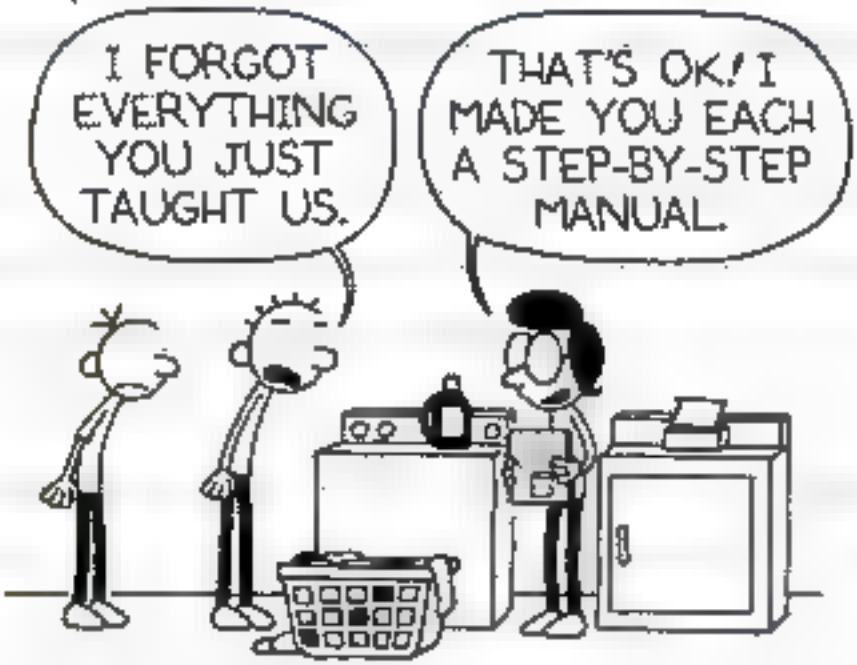
I actually hit Rowley with the football a couple of times, but I never did knock him off the Big Wheel. I think I need more velocity on my throws or something. Who knows? Maybe I'll finally take Dad up on his offer to teach me how to throw a football.

I think we would have played our new game all day, but Mom saw what we were doing and called me inside. She said our game was the stupidest idea I had ever had, and she banned me from playing it with Rowley any more.

All I can say is, if everyone listened to their mother, I'll bet there would be no such thing as dodge ball or tackle football. I guess I'll just have to be extra careful to only play when Mom's not around from now on.

The rest of my night wasn't very fun. Mom spent about two hours teaching me and Rodrick how to do our own laundry. After Mom was done going over how to use the washer and dryer and fabric softener and all that, she told us she wanted us each to do one load of wash tonight.

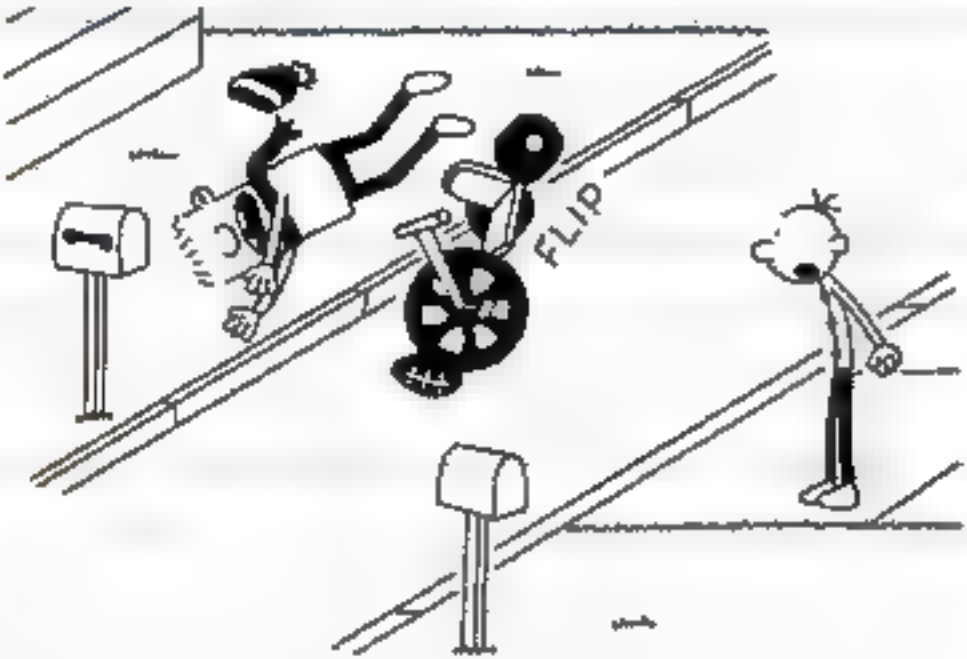
Rodrick tried to play dumb so he could get out of it. That trick might work on Dad, but Mom was ready for it.



Monday, February 21st

There was no school today, so me and Rowley spent the whole day playing our Big Wheel game without any interference from Mom.

I finally knocked Rowley off the Big Wheel on my eighth throw, but it didn't happen the way I planned. When I threw the football, it got jammed under the front wheel of the Big Wheel, and Rowley went flying.



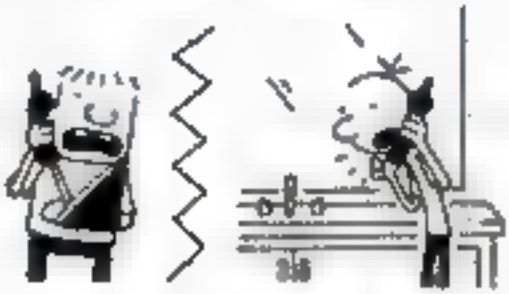
Rowley tried to break his fall by sticking out his arms, and he landed pretty hard on his left hand. I figured he'd shake it off and get right back on the Big Wheel, but he didn't.

I tried to cheer him up so he wouldn't go home crying and get me in trouble. I did a bunch of jokes that usually make Rowley bust out laughing, but he barely even smiled. So I knew he must have been hurt pretty bad.

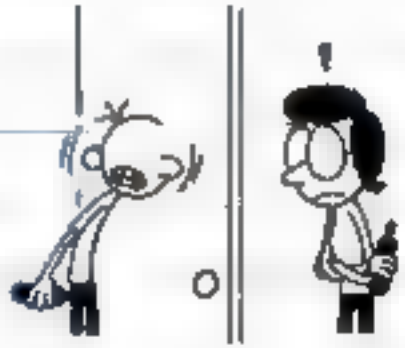
I knew that if Mom found out we were playing the Big Wheel game she banned us from playing, I'd be in really hot water. So I got Rowley to agree that we'd tell everyone he hurt his hand by accidentally slamming it in his front door, and nobody would ever have to know the truth.

Rowley went up to his house to put ice on his hand, and I went to my house. A few hours later, Rowley called me. He told me his mom took him to the emergency room, and his hand was BROKEN.

Now I really knew my goose was cooked. I made sure Rowley was sticking with the story, and he said he was.



I was pretty relieved to hear that, and we both hung up the phone. I had shut myself in the bathroom when Rowley called so Mom wouldn't hear our conversation. But guess what? When Rowley called, Mom had picked up the phone upstairs, and she listened to our WHOLE conversation.



Mom was really steamed. She gave me a 15-minute lecture about disobedience. Then, she told me I had to call Rowley's house to apologize to him AND to his mother.

Mom stood there while I dialed Rowley's number.

I know Mom was just standing there to make sure my apology sounded sincere. And let me tell you, I gave Mom her money's worth. I wasn't so much worried about Rowley as I was feeling sorry for myself for the deep doo doo I was in. So believe me, those were real tears coming out of my eyes.

Unfortunately, Rodrick was there to capture the whole episode on video. So I guess I know what tape will be playing on our t.v. during the next family gathering.

Tuesday, February 22nd

This afternoon, Mom spent a lot of time on the phone with Mrs. Jefferson. I've been around long enough to know that when two moms get on the phone, it's never a good thing.

Mrs. Jefferson was telling Mom that Rowley is "heartbroken" because now that his hand is in a cast, he can't try out for the talent show.

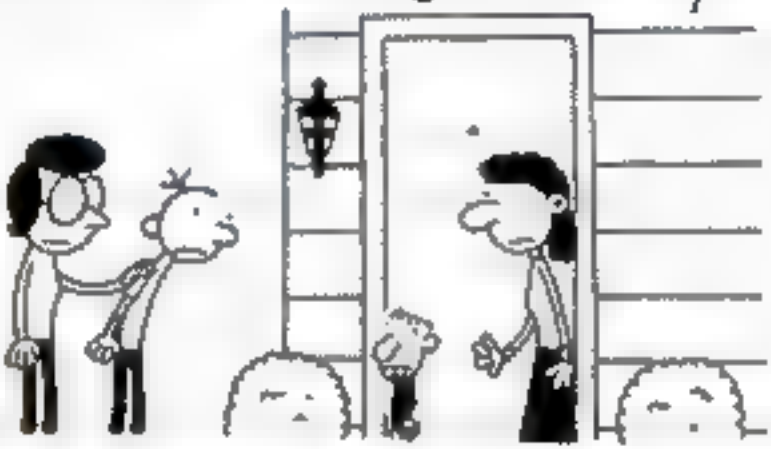
Apparently, Rowley has been practicing a magic act with this kid named Scotty Douglas who lives at the bottom of our hill. So I guess that's how Rowley kept himself busy during our fight.

Mom got the bright idea that since I broke Rowley's hand, I should fill in for him. Mom called up Mrs. Douglas and told her I could sub in for Rowley, starting today.

I told Mom I was way too busy after school to be practicing stupid magic tricks, but she knew I was bluffing. Drum lessons are over with, so I've got plenty of free time.

On Friday, we were over at Collin's house playing a board game while we were supposed to be in the middle of one of Rodrick's drum lessons. Collin's dad was really mad because he had paid for a lesson that his kid wasn't even at, and he called Mom to complain. Mom made Rodrick refund all of Collin's money, and so now, drum lessons have been cancelled for good.

I don't know what Rowley was doing partnering up with Scotty Douglas. Scotty's only in the second grade, and Rowley is in the seventh. I think Rowley had better get a better backup friend, or at least get one that's his own age. Anyway, Mom marched me down to Scotty's house around 5:00 and told me I had to practice until I knew all the tricks as good as Rowley did.



The first thing I found out was that Rowley did not exactly have a starring role in this magic act. Scotty's the Magician, with the black hat and wand and all that, but Rowley was just his ASSISTANT.

I told Scotty there was no way I was going to be an assitant to a second grader, and that if this talent show thing was going to work out, we were going to have to be equal partners.

But Scotty said it was HIS magic set, not mine, and he started to throw a big tantrum. I didn't need any more trouble, so I just went along with the idea to shut Scotty up.

Being Scotty's assistant wasn't that hard. All I had to do was hand him each item from his Beginner's Magic Set whenever he needed it, and he did the tricks. The only real drawback was that I had to wear this dumb glittery silver shirt that looked like something Gramma would wear to Bingo night. I tried to tell Scotty it would be cooler if I just wore jeans and a black shirt, but Scotty said that wouldn't look "magic."

I only messed up my assistant duties a few times when I gave Scotty the wrong item, but you can't really blame me. Scotty has a wicked speech impediment, and it's not always easy to figure out what he's saying.

Overall though, I guess I can't complain. This whole deal beats the heck out of a real punishment. But ask me again how I feel after we perform on a stage in front of 500 people, and not just Scotty's baby sister.

Wednesday, February 23rd

Mom told me she would drive me in to school this morning, since today was my birthday.

I'm sure she thought she was doing me a favor, but when she dropped me off, she totally blew it for me.

I've been trying to keep my birthday quiet around school, and up until today, I was successful.

In elementary school, it's great when everyone knows it's your birthday. But in middle school, it's the exact opposite.

Once people find out it's your birthday, they give you one punch for every year you've been alive. I tried to take my punches like a man, but it was hard when some guys were lining up for seconds.

I don't know who dreamed up this birthday punches thing, but I can almost guarantee you it was someone whose birthday falls in the summer.

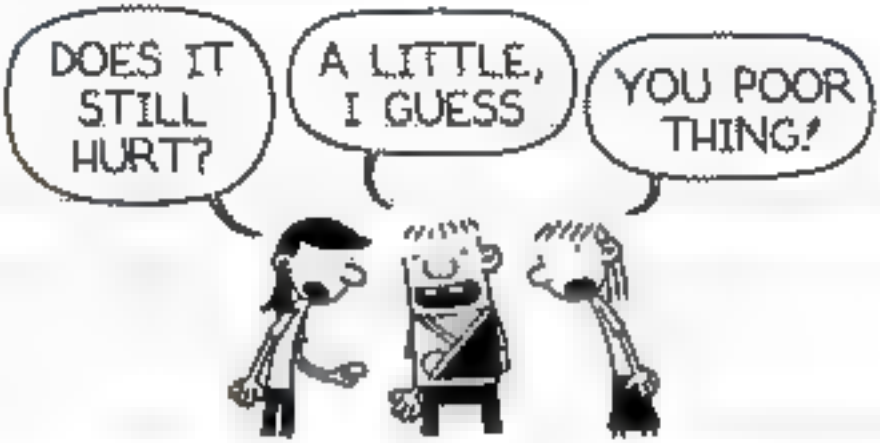
Besides getting beaten to a pulp at school, the only other thing that made today different from a regular day was that I didn't have to do the dishes after dinner.

But Mom still made me do laundry. Mom's so happy that me and Rodrick know how to do laundry that now, she's making us do EVERYONE's laundry.

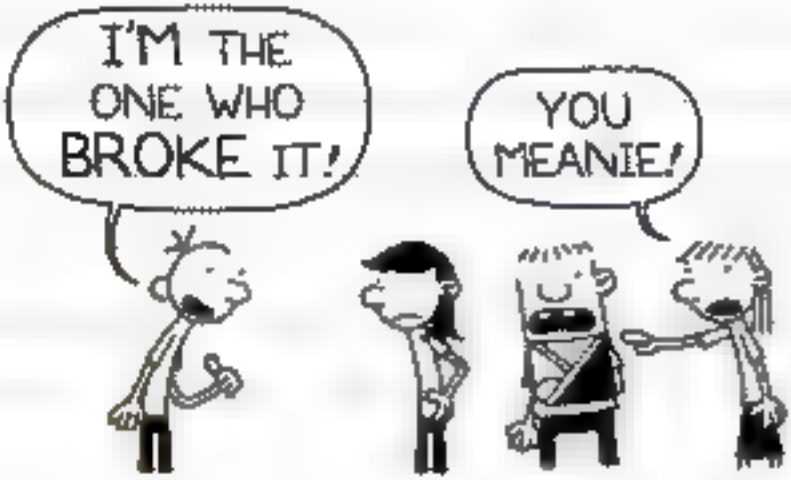
I personally think it should be illegal for a boy to have to fold his mother's underwear. And double illegal if he has to do it on his own birthday.

Thursday, February 24th

Ever since Rowley came to school with a cast on his hand, he's gotten a ton of attention from the girls in our class.



I tried to cash in on some of Rowley's new popularity today, but it totally backfired.



I still can't believe I had to fill in for Rowley as Scotty Douglas' magic assistant. Believe me, Rowley could have handled his duties with one hand.

Talent show tryouts were today, and me and Scotty were the last act to take the stage. Scotty kept messing up because he was nervous, and I wasn't exactly the best assistant. I had brought along some reading material for when I didn't need to be doing anything, and I was kind of tuned out for most of the act.

After we finished, Mrs. Norton told us our act was "unprofessional" and that we didn't make it into the talent show. It's pretty embarassing, especially since we're the only act out of 32 that didn't make the cut.

I know we weren't exactly the best act trying out today, but we weren't the worst, either. This kindergartener named Tyler Murphy made it in, and all he did was rollerskate figure eights around a boombox that was playing "Yankee Doodle."

Friday, February 25th

Rowley is still getting WAY too much attention for his broken hand. Everyone's always offering to carry his books for him, and today a bunch of girls invited Rowley over to their lunch table so they could FEED him.

What really ticks me off is that Rowley is right-handed, and it's his LEFT hand that's broken. So Rowley can feed himself just fine. I thought about walking over there and blowing Rowley's cover, but then I stopped myself. I figure if this turns into a permanent spot at the girls' table for Rowley, maybe I can tag along and get myself a seat, too.

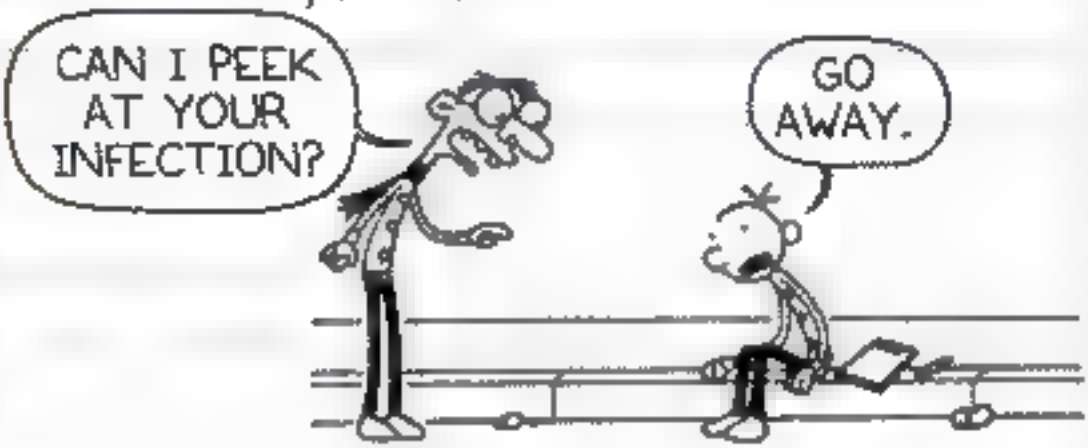
Believe me, I can see how good of a racket this injury thing is. I decided last night that I would fake an injury and get some attention for myself.

So before school today, I wrapped my hand in an Ace bandage I found in Mom's closet, and when people at school asked about it, here's what I told them:

I couldn't figure out why the girls weren't swarming me the way they do with Rowley, but then I realized what the problem was.

See, the cast is a great gimmick because everyone wants to sign it. It's not exactly easy to sign an Ace bandage with a pen, so I came up with a solution I thought would be just as good.

That idea was a total bust, too. My bandage did end up attracting attention from a couple of people, but not the type of people I was going for.



Saturday, February 26th

This new system where we kids have to do our own laundry isn't working out for me at all. I keep forgetting to put in a load of wash, and then when I go to get dressed in the morning, I don't have any clean clothes. So then I have to dig through my dirty clothes and find something that's wearable.

This whole week, I ended up wearing socks that felt like cardboard. And if I don't come to school with a clean shirt on Monday, I'm going to get sent down to the Nurse's Office for a hygiene lecture, for sure.

I've been doing my best not to sweat or do anything active so I can stretch out my clothes supply as long as possible.

I've definitely got to do my laundry this weekend, or I'm going to go bankrupt. I bought a clean pair of underwear off of Rodrick today, and he scalped me for 10 bucks.

I didn't want to fork over the cash, but things have gotten so bad, I've been wearing my bathing suit as underwear lately. It probably wouldn't be all that big of a deal, but yesterday, when we had to change for gym class, I really wished I wasn't wearing my Speedos.

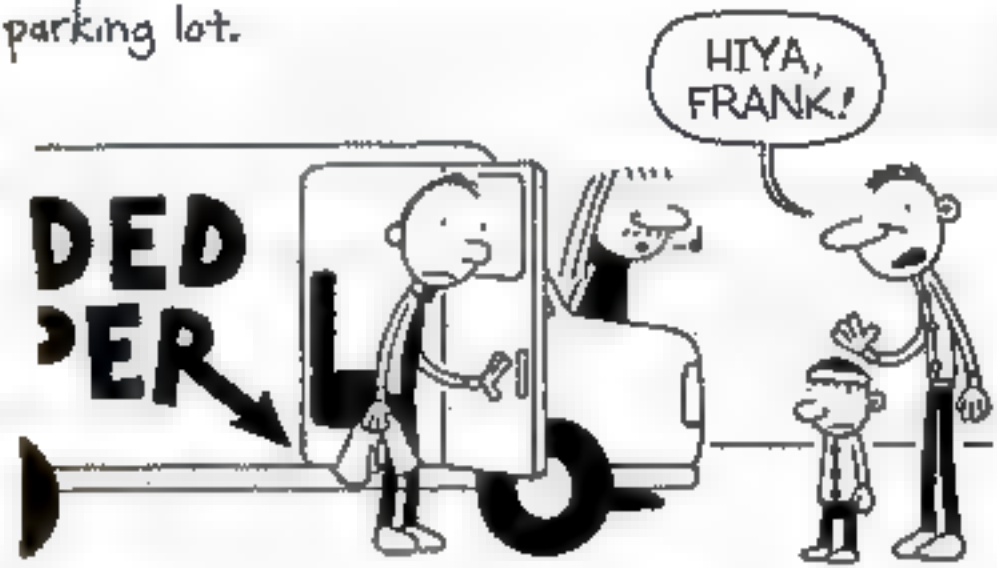
It probably wouldn't be all that big of a deal, but yesterday, when we had to change for gym class, I really wished I wasn't wearing my Speedos.

Tomorrow night is the talent show, and Mom's making us all go because Rodrick's in it. If I don't get my act together and wash a load of laundry today, I'm going to end up having nothing to wear except the sparkly magician's assistant shirt Scotty Douglas gave me.

Sunday, February 27th

Tonight was the big school talent show. I didn't want to go, and neither did Dad. But Mom said we all had to show our support for Rodrick's band, so we didn't have any choice.

Rodrick had all his drum equipment in Mom's car, so Dad had to ride with Bill. I'm sure Dad wasn't too happy about showing up at the school in a van that had "Loded Diper" written on it, especially when he ran into people he knew in the parking lot.



We each had to pay three dollars admission at the front door. I figured we should get in for free because we've had to suffer through about a million of Rodrick's band practices. I'll bet Dad would have paid $20 to NOT have to go.

This year, they decided to have one big talent show for the elementary, middle and high school in the area, and I think it was a bad idea. You ended up having kindergarteners reading poems about their teddy bears followed by 18-year-olds doing speed metal guitar solos.

Dad definitely didn't approve of Larry Larkin with all of Larry's piercings. Halfway through Larry's act, Dad leaned over to the guy on his left and said something in his ear.

I wish I would have had time to warn Dad that the guy he was talking to was Larry's father.

Mr. Larkin got up and moved to another part of the auditorium after that comment. I think Dad's still scratching his head over what happened.

The talent show went on FOREVER. At the two and a half hour mark they decided to start merging acts together to keep the show moving along.

Sometimes it worked out alright, like when Patty Farrell tapdanced on the left-hand side of the stage and Spencer Kit juggled on the right.

But sometimes it wasn't such a good fit. For example, they decided to pair Rodrick's band up with Taylor Murphy, the kid who skates figure eights as his talent.

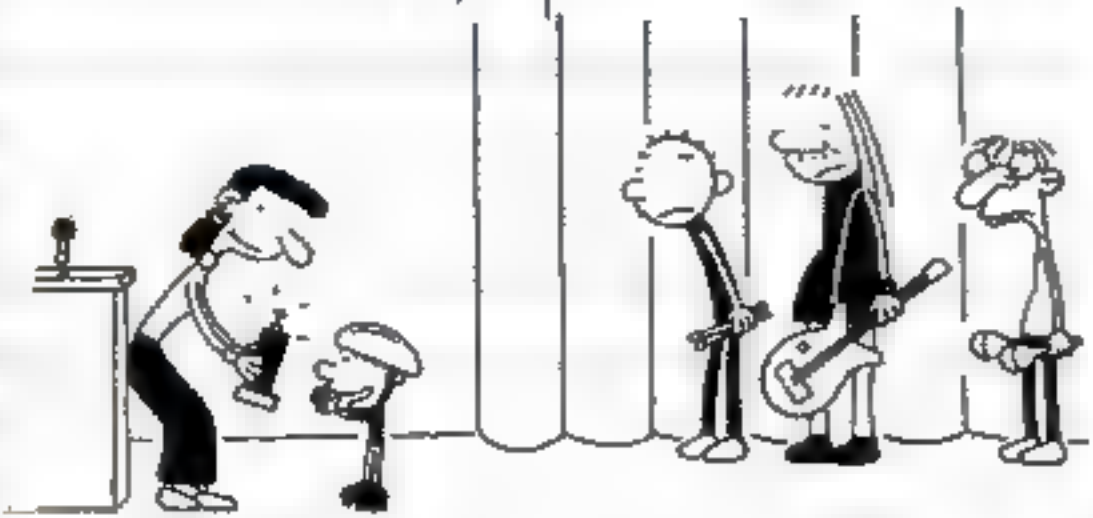
Rodrick has been saying all week how this talent show was his band's big chance to get "noticed," so I'm sure he wasn't too thrilled with having a kindergartener be a part of his act.

They had Ward up there working "Security," I guess to make sure no screaming girls made it up onto the stage.

But the only female in the vicinity was Mom, who Rodrick asked to videotape the performance from the side of the stage.

When Mom got out of her seat, Dad took the opportunity to move to the furthest possible point from the stage. Dad brought some cotton wads along with him, which he stuffed into his ears until Rodrick's band was done playing.

At the end of the night, Rodrick's band didn't win anything. But Taylor Murphy did take home the "Best Musical Act" prize.



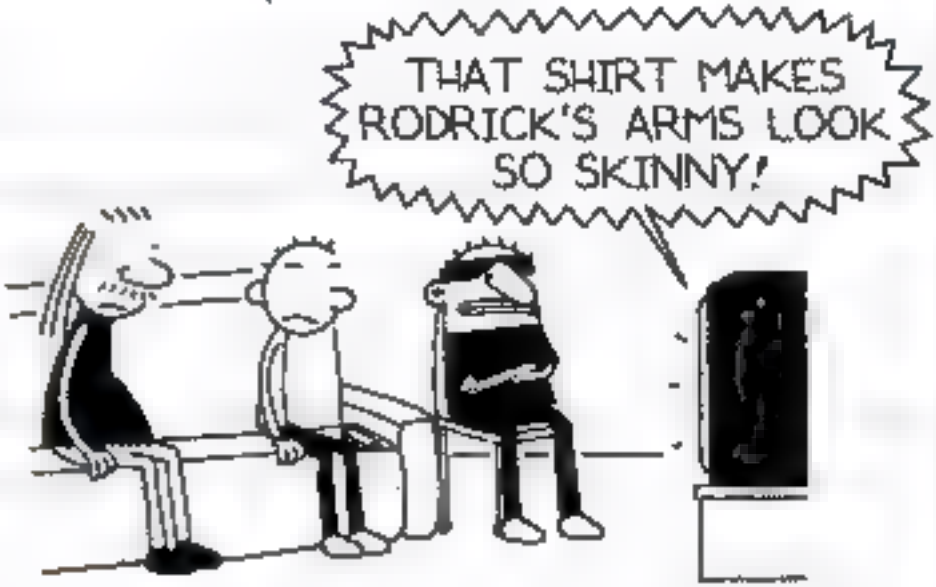
Believe it or not, the Grand Prize Winner was Rowley's babysitter, Leland. He won for his ventroloquist act, which the judges said was "wholesome."

I never thought I'd agree with Rodrick on anything, but I'm starting to wonder if he's right about Leland being a nerd.

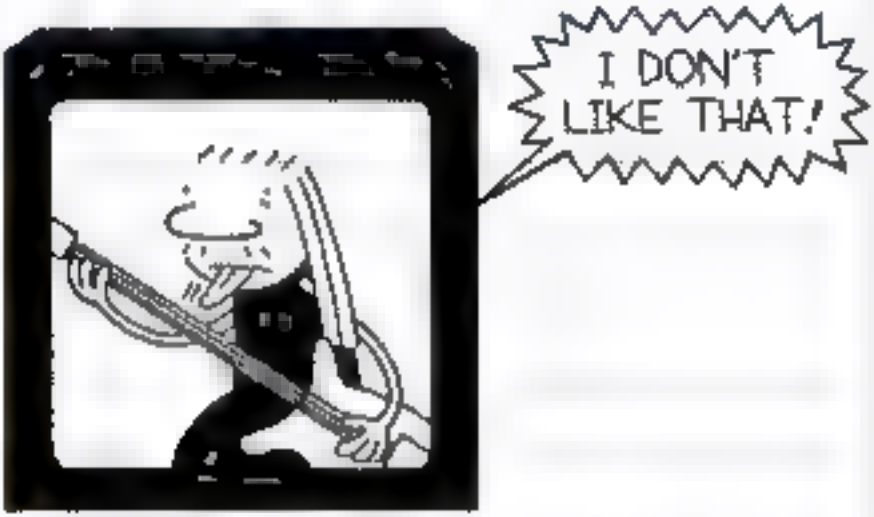
Monday, February 28th

Last night, Rodrick asked Mom to videotape his band performing at the talent show because he wanted to mail the tape off to MTV and hit the big time. Tonight, Rodrick had his band over to watch the tape.

I don't think Mom was the smartest choice for camera person. During the first half of the performance, Mom was making little comments, and you could hear everything she said loud and clear.



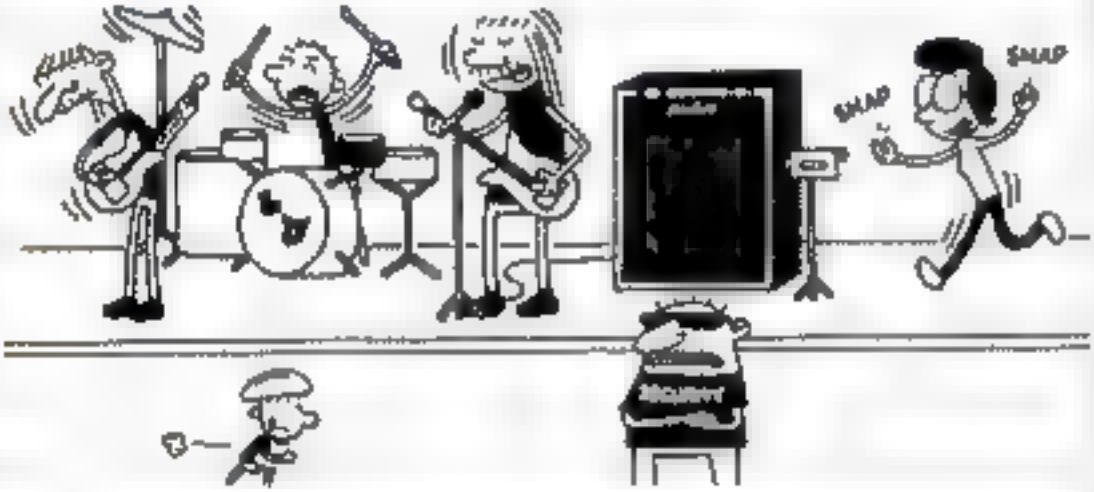
Every once in a while Bill would stick out his tongue and flick up and down like a rock star, and then you'd hear Mom ring in with her opinion.



So the tape was totally worthless to Rodrick, but he had a decent backup option.

The school taped the whole talent show, and they were showing it at 9:00 tonight on our local cable channel. So Rodrick got out a blank tape and waited for his band to come on.

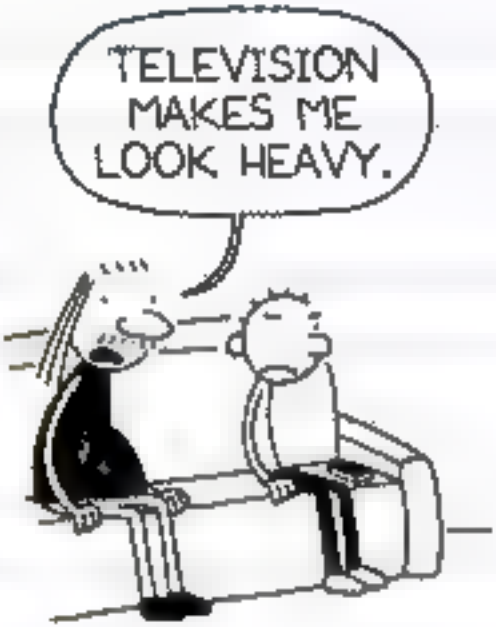
The school actually did a pretty good job of filming the talent show. Rodrick's band came on, and things were looking pretty good until halfway through the performance. That's when Mom stepped away from the camera and started dancing. And whoever was doing the taping turned the camera on Mom for the rest of the song.



I've never seen Rodrick so mad at Mom. He accused her of sabotaging the performance on purpose so his band wouldn't make it big. But Mom just said that if he didn't want people to dance, he shouldn't play music.

Rodrick was the only one in his band who really got bent out of shape.

The only thing Bill seemed to care about was how he looked on t.v.

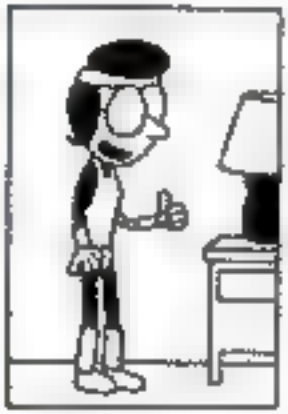


Tuesday, March 1

Tonight after dinner, Dad took me and Rodrick to a movie. Dad was basically just looking for an excuse to get out of the house because Mom is mad at him.

Remember how I said Mom was taking an exercise class a couple of weeks ago? Well, Mom quit after her first class.

Dad had taken a picture of Mom decked out in all of her new exercise gear, and today, Dad picked up the pictures from the photo place.



Dad got duplicate prints, and as a joke, he put both of the pictures of Mom in her workout clothes on the refrigerator and wrote labels at the bottom of each one.

Dad doesn't really joke around like that a whole lot, and I guess he was pretty proud of himself.

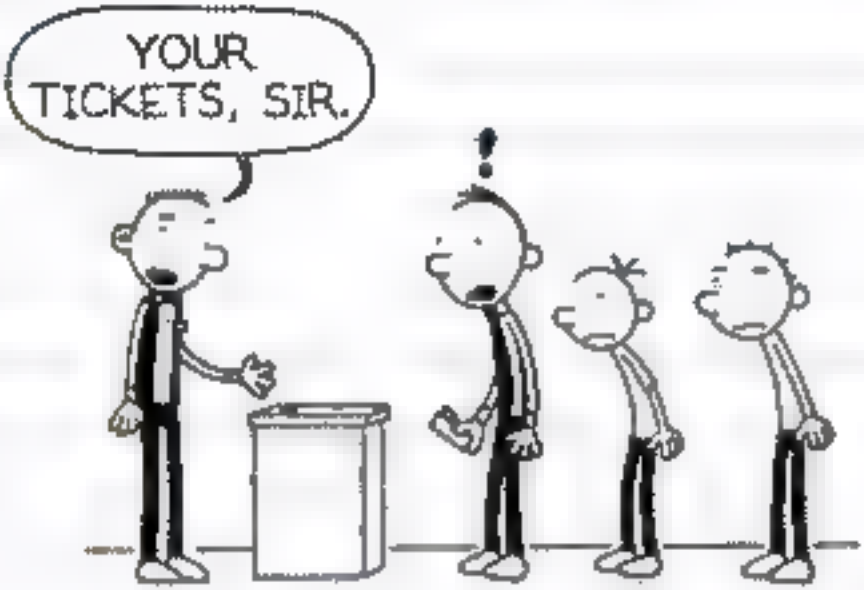
But that's not the kind of joke Mom appreciates, and she let him know about it.

So Dad's in the doghouse with Mom. But on the positive side, I got a free movie out of it, and on a school night.

You know, on the way to the movie theater, I was thinking about how things are going pretty good for me these days. I'm not stuck in some sport or extracurricular activity I hate, and Mom and Dad haven't been breathing down my neck lately.

So as we were walking into the movie theater, I was thinking, Life is good. But things took a very bad turn a few minutes later.

After we bought our tickets, we went inside and gave them to the usher, who was some teenager with a military haircut. I didn't recognize the guy at first, but when Dad saw him, he stopped in his tracks.



I read the guy's name tag, and when I did, I couldn't believe my eyes.

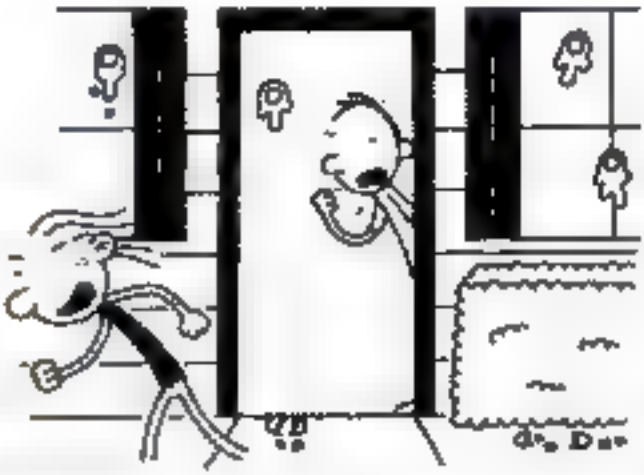
It was Lenwood Heath, the baddest teenager who ever lived on our street, and also Dad's arch enemy. The last I heard of Lenwood, he got sent off to military academy. I always figured he'd just go on to prison from there.

But here he was standing right in front of us, looking like he just graduated from the Air Force or something. I guess Dad was pretty impressed, because he struck up a conversation with Lenwood.

Lenwood said he's still at Spag Union Military Academy, and that he's working at the movie theater during winter break.

Then he told Dad that he's trying to get good grades at Spag Union because he's wants to get into West Point.

From the way Dad was chumming around with Lenwood, you would never have known that this is the kid he called the cops on at least 20 different times.



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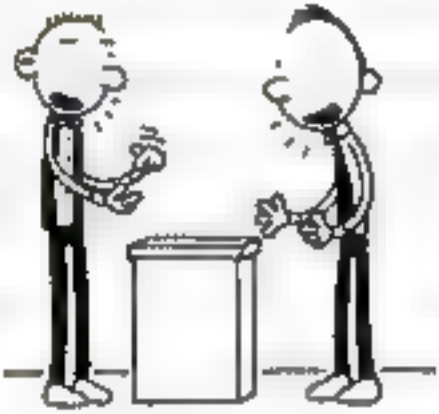


AFTER

Dad and Lenwood must have talked for 15 minutes, and it made us miss the previews. I was a little irritated, but I didn't think about it much past that.

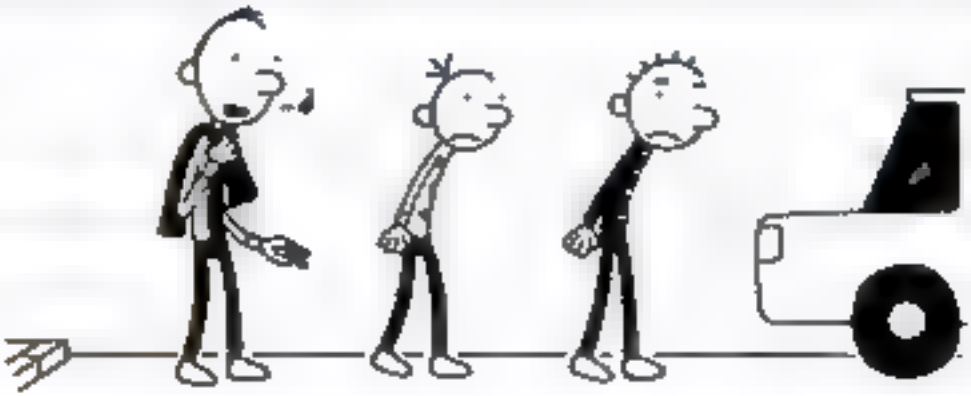
But the full impact of what had just happened didn't hit me until halfway through the movie, and when it did, I practically spit out my popcorn.

I realized that running into Lenwood at the movie theater tonight might be the worst thing that ever happened to me.

Now that Dad saw how a military academy could make a man out of a juvenile delinquint like Lenwood Heath, it wasn't a stretch to think it could make a man out of a wimp like ME.

I just prayed Dad hadn't thought things through that far, but after the movie, I could tell Dad's mind was already ticking.

The movie was pretty terrible, but from the way Dad was acting, you'd think he just walked out of the best show he'd ever seen.



Wednesday, March 2

After we got home from the movies last night, Dad went right to the computer. This morning, I checked to see what he had been up to, and my worst fear was confirmed.

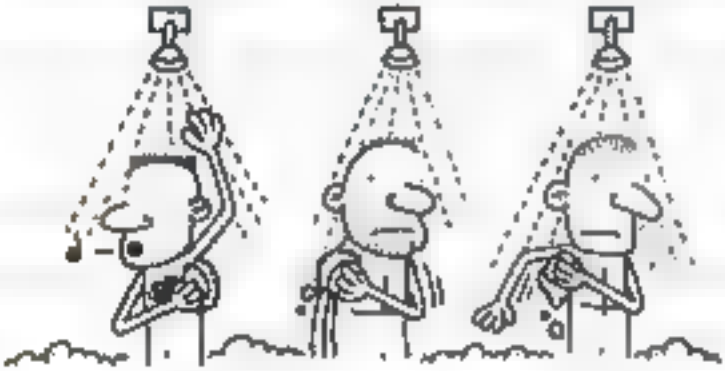
Dad had been on the Spag Union web site, and he visited the "Admissions" page. So he's actually serious about shipping me off to military school.

I figured I'd better nip this in the bud right away, so I went to Mom. It turns out she didn't know anything about Dad's interest in Spag Union, so this was my chance to get her on my side.

I told Mom all about the school and how it's like a boot camp where they make you shave your head and do push-ups at five o'clock in the morning. Then I showed Mom the website where they have all these pictures of boys marching and doing pull-ups and saluting and stuff like that.

I figured Mom would go right upstairs and tell Dad that his plan was stupid and that she'd never send me to a place like Spag Union. But I found out I wasn't going to be able to count on Mom after all.

There is just no way I could survive at a place like Spag Union. First of all, I wouldn't be able to get past the bathroom situation. I'll bet Spag Union is one of those places that has open showers, with no privacy booths or anything.



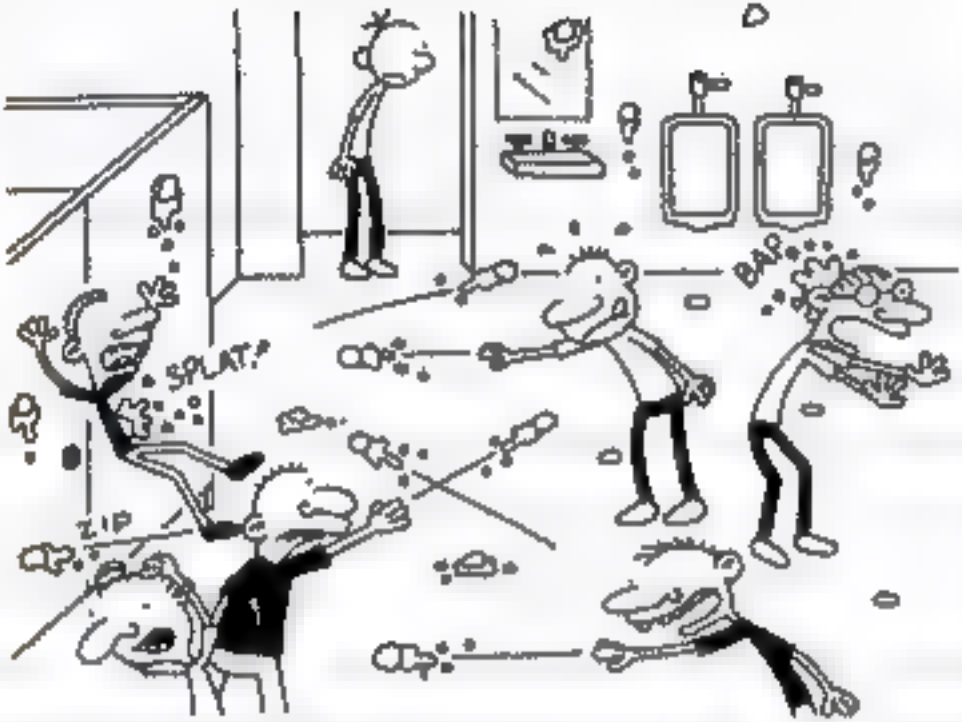
In fact, I'll bet they don't even have stall doors on the toilets at Spag Union.

And that would be a disaster, because when it comes to the bathroom, I have major privacy issues.

I don't even use the bathroom at school unless it's an absolute emergency. A few classrooms in our school have bathrooms in them, but I can't use those. Every little sound you make is broadcast to the whole class.

The only other option is to use the bathroom by the cafeteria, and it's just pure madness in there.

Somebody got the idea a few weeks ago to start throwing wet toilet paper around, and the idea really caught on. Now, every time you go in there, it's like a war zone.



So forget about using the toilets in there. I basically just have to hold it until I get home, which is really hard on the days when I have two chocolate milks for lunch.

I don't know what I'm going to do if I get sent to Spag Union. Because I don't think I can hold it for four years.

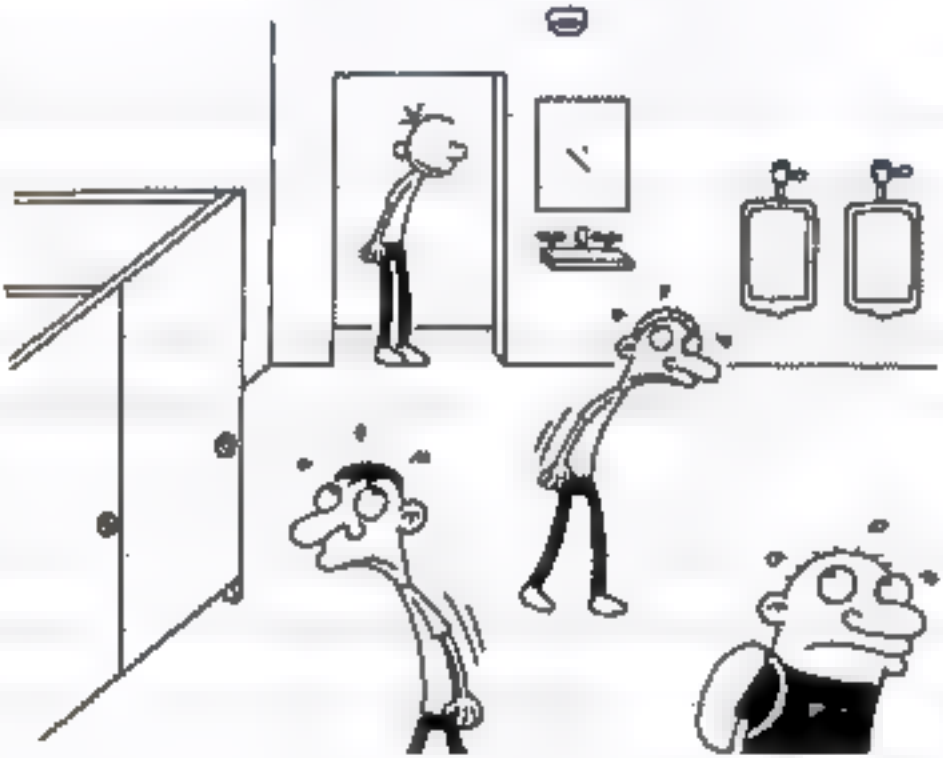
Thursday, March 3

Well, I managed to solve one problem in my life.

Today at school, I noticed there was a new air freshener on the ceiling in the boys' bathroom.

So at lunch, I spread a rumor that the school put a little camera in there to catch the kids who were throwing wet toilet paper. I guess I must have told the right people, because by the time sixth period rolled around, everyone in the school knew about the so-called spy camera in the boys' bathroom.

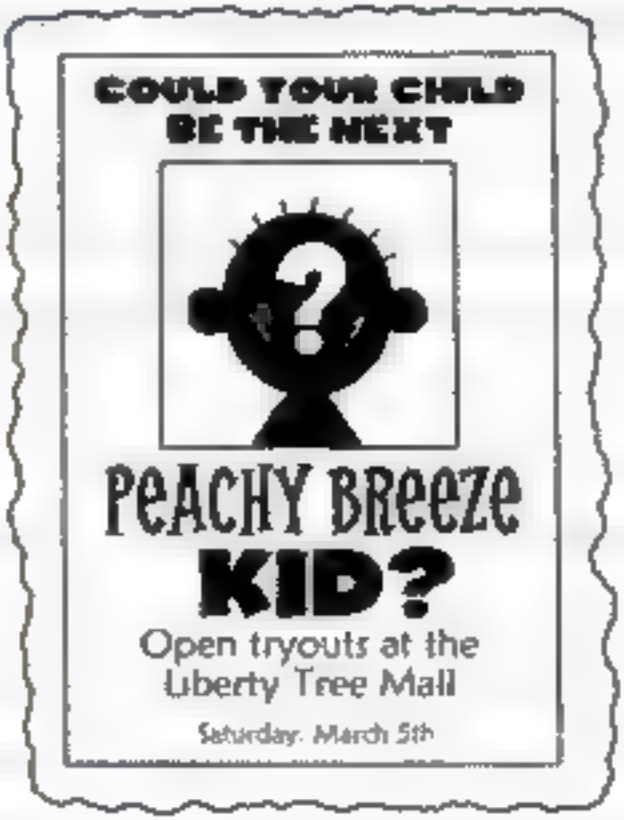
My plan ended up being even more successful than I hoped it would. I walked in the boys' bathroom around 2:00, and it was quieter in there than it is in the library.



It was nice to finally be able to use the facilities without worrying about getting smacked upside the head with a glob of toilet paper.

Friday, March 4

Tonight Mom cut out a newspaper ad and left it on the kitchen table.



Peachy Breeze is a local ice cream company, and their t.v. commercials always end with some dorky kid saying their slogan.

The kid used to be kind of cute, but over the years, he's gotten pretty groaty looking. So I guess I can see why they're looking to replace him.

My first reaction when I saw the ad on the kitchen table was that if Mom thinks I'm going to try out to be the new Peachy Breeze kid, she's out of her mind.

There is nothing on this earth that Dad hates more than those Peachy Breeze commercials, and if I got the part, he'd probably throw me out of the house.

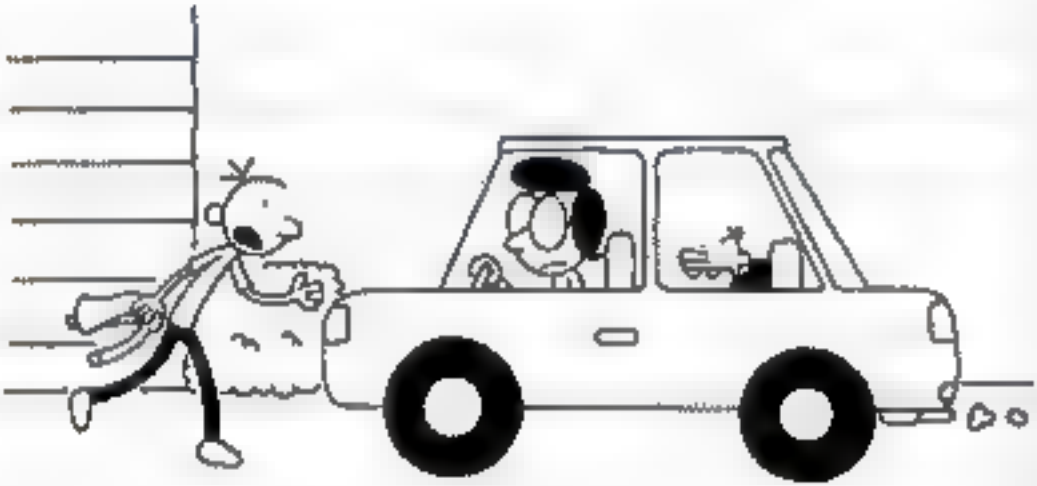
Just last week he practically sprained his ankle trying to shut off the t.v. when a Peachy Breeze ad came on.

But then when I thought about it, I realized that getting the part could really change my life.

I'll bet the original Peachy Breeze Kid is a millionaire by now. And once Dad gets used to me being rich, you better believe he's not going to ship me off to any military academy.

Saturday, March 5

This morning, while I was getting dressed for the big Peachy Breeze tryouts, I heard Mom's car pulling out of the driveway. I ran out the door and barely caught Mom before she drove off.

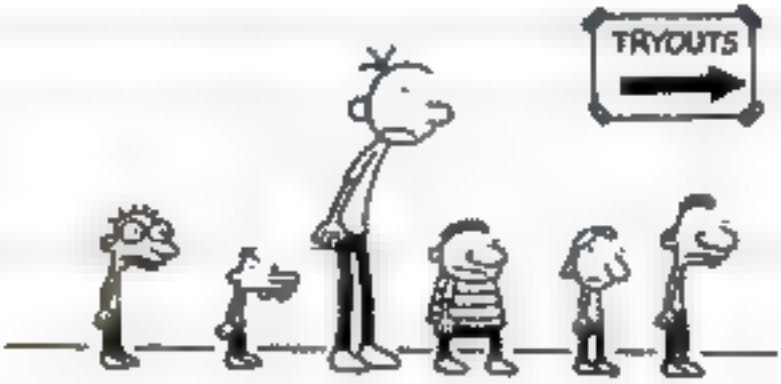


For a second, I couldn't figure out why Mom was leaving without me. But then I figured it out.

Mom wanted MANNY to audition to be the Peachy Breeze Kid, and when she cut out that ad, she wasn't thinking of me at all.

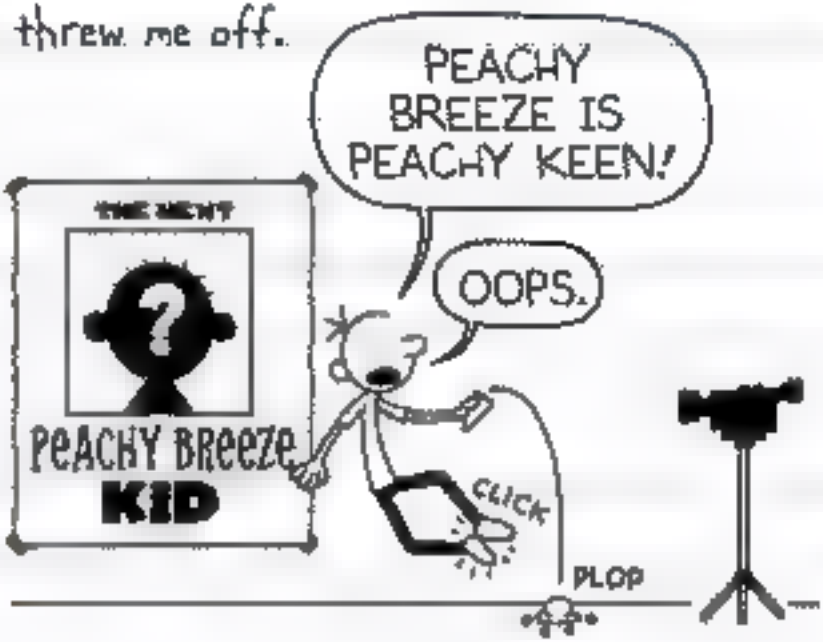
But I wasn't going to let that stop me from trying out for the part, and I got in the car anyway. Mom was just happy I was coming because it meant she could leave Manny with me while she went off shopping.

The line of kids who wanted to be the next Peachy Breeze Kid stretched all the way around the mall. When I looked at the other kids in the line, I realized maybe I was a little bit outside the age range that the Peachy Breeze people were looking for.



I figured I'd better come up with some sort of gimmick to set me apart from the rest of the field, since I wasn't going to win on cuteness.

So right before it was my turn to go in front of the camera, I decided that when I said the Peachy Breeze slogan, I'd jump up and click my heels together. When the camera rolled, I got the slogan part right, but the heel clicking thing kindof threw me off.



I could tell I wasn't going to get the part when they sent me out the door without even asking for my name.

But my audition went better than Manny's did. Manny had some kind of allergic reaction to the ice cream, and his lips swelled up like balloons. So I guess now we know the kid is allergic to peaches.

Sunday, March 6th

After church today, we had to go over to Grandpa's for lunch. I figured that now that he's got a girlfriend, we wouldn't have to eat his watercrest salad anymore, but I was wrong. Maurlene said that since she works in a cafeteria, she refuses to cook.

I really wasn't in the mood to choke down a bowl of cold green beans. So when no one was looking, I stuffed my salad in my pants pocket. It felt pretty disgusting with the vinegar running down my leg, but I still think it may have been one of the better decisions I ever made.

For some reason, Maurlene was really trying to get on Mom's good side today, but Mom wasn't really warming up to her. There was an uncomfortable moment at the end when we were leaving, and Maurlene tried to give Mom a hug. But Mom did a pretty good job of avoiding any physical contact.

Back at home, I turned on the news at 6:00 to find out who won the Peachy Breeze Kid contest. I had given up any hope that I had won it, but I was still curious to find out who actually did.

Believe it or not, the kid they picked was Scotty Douglas, my talent show partner. I have no idea how he won, especially considering he couldn't even get the slogan right.

But hopefully he'll remember our partnership and I can mooch off of him once his royalty checks start rolling in.

When they sign kids to long-term deals like this, they really should do their research and find out what the kid's older siblings look like. Because if they had met Evan Douglas, I'll bet they would have thought twice before offering Scotty a 10-year contract.

Monday, March 7th

I guess I shouldn't be that surprised that Dad is looking to send me off to a military school, especially now that I'm officially a teenager.

Ever since I turned 13, Dad has been treating me differently. In fact, Dad first started protesting the fact that I was becoming a teenager at my birthday party.

I guess now that I'm 13, Dad expects me to suddenly transform into a juvenille delinquent or something.

I've noticed other people have started treating me differently, too. Just this morning, me and Rowley got called down to the principal's office for "trespassing" on Mrs. Dowd's property. We had to walk on her grass on the way to school because the sidewalks are flooded from all the melting snow. Mrs. Dowd called the POLICE, who called our principal.

You would think Mrs. Dowd would cut us a break, especially after we delivered Meals on Wheels to her house about 50 times this summer.

Tuesday, March 8th

You know, if I had played my cards right, I wouldn't have to worry about this military school thing. Because when it came time for me to enlist at Spag Union, I'd be out of the country.

I should have sucked up to Mamadou, my pen pal, so he'd invite me to stay with him in France as an exchange student. But we don't even write to each other any more. Mamadou pretty much killed the deal when he sent me his picture in his last letter.

We were actually doing a pretty good job of writing back and forth for a while there.

I had decided early on that I was going to give this pen pal thing my best effort. When I wrote to Mamadou, I tried to be as helpful to him as I could.

Dear Gregory,
I am very privileged to make your acquaintence.

Dear Mamadou,
"Acquaintance" only has one "e." I think you need to work on your English.

To be honest with you, I'm kind of relieved we stopped writing. We pretty much ran out of things to say by our fourth letter.

Plus, if we had kept it up, I was going to go bankrupt paying for stamps.

Dear Mamadou,
How old are you?

Dear Gregory,
12.

Dear Mamadou,
Oh.

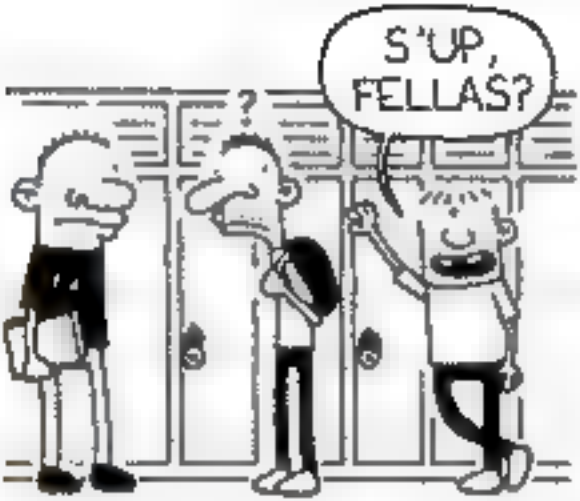
COST:
$13

Wednesday, March 9th

Rowley showed up to school this morning with a big pimple smack in the middle of his forehead.

And the way Rowley was acting, you'd think it was the best thing that ever happened to him.

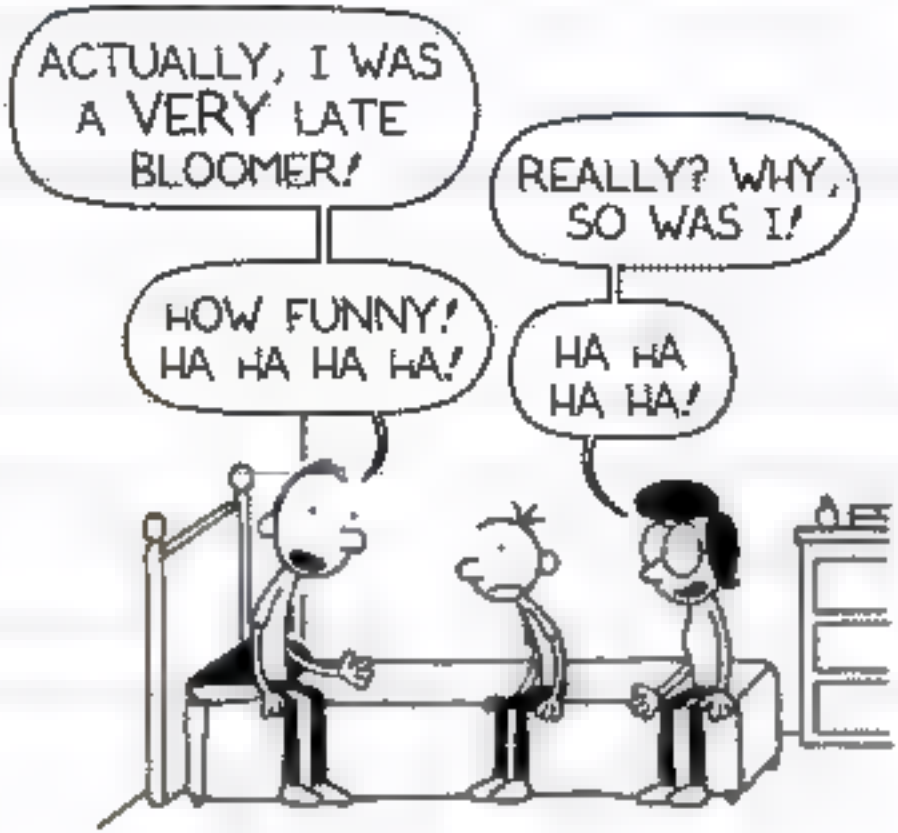
I guess now that Rowley is out of his cast, he needs to find some other way to get attention for himself. He even tried to use his zit to get popularity points with some eighth graders.



Yeah, Rowley was really irking me today. And it's not like I'm jealous or anything, because believe me, I'm not.

But it did get me to thinking. I started to wonder when I'm going to hit my growth spurt or when I can expect to have a full beard and all that.

So I figured the person to talk to was Dad.

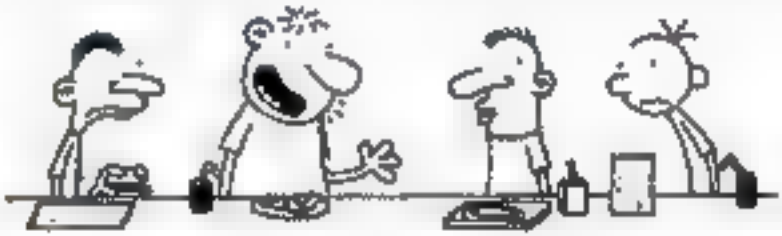


It was definitely not the answer I was looking for.

Speaking of "answers," tomorrow is the first day of the Reproductive Health unit at school. "Reproductive Health" is just fancy words the school uses for you-know-what.

Personally, I'm looking forward to the Reproductive Health unit.

Everything I know about the birds and the bees comes from Albert Sandy, and I'm starting to think maybe he's passing along bad information.



Every kid who takes the Reproductive Health unit has to get a permission slip signed by a parent, and I've been worried Mom will block me from taking the class.

So I had to make sure Mom would sign my permission slip.

I covered up the part of the form that said "I give my child permission to take the Reproductive Health unit" with a piece of paper I typed on, and then I taped them together.

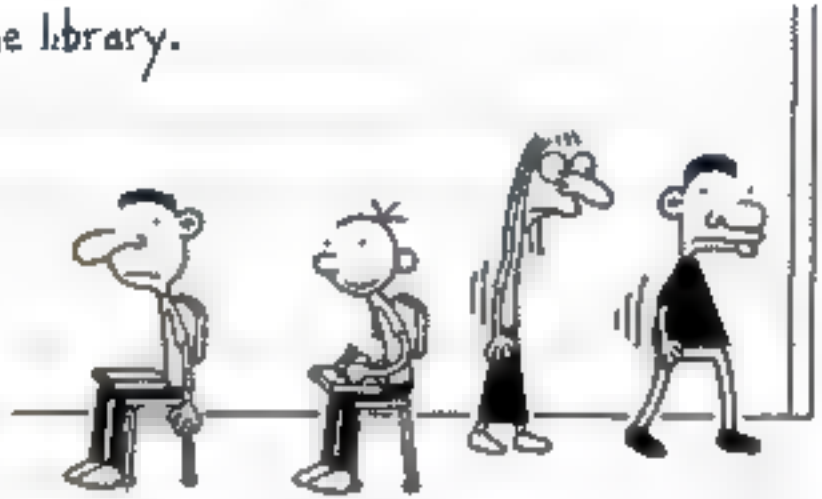
I give my child permission to do more homework.

Parent/Guardian

Luckily, Mom didn't look at it too closely, and I got the signature I needed.

Thursday, March 10th

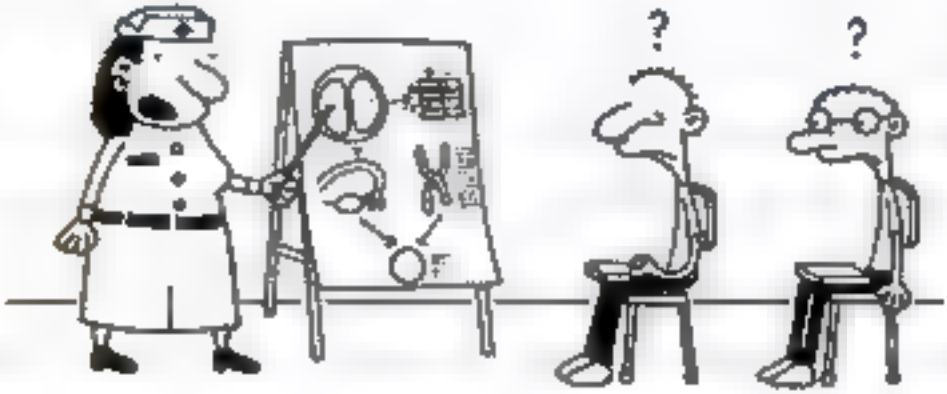
I was really glad I got my Reproductive Health permission slip signed yesterday. Because before class started today, the kids whose parents wouldn't let them take the unit got banished to the library.



As soon as those kids were gone, Ms. Flowers, the nurse, started her lecture. I couldn't believe I was finally going to get to hear all the juicy secrets I've been waiting so long for.

But the class was nothing like I expected.

The whole lecture was all about chromosomes and zygotes and recessive genes and all this other scientific mumbo jumbo.



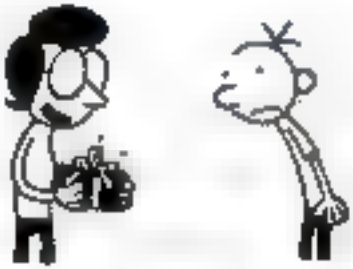
I kept waiting for Ms. Flowers to tell us she was just joking around and get down to the nitty gritty, but she never did.

It started to dawn on me that the school was just trying to confuse us with a whole bunch of gibberish to throw us off the trail.

And it worked, too. Because at lunch, a few of us tried to tell the kids who got sent to the library everything they missed, and we couldn't even agree on a single thing.

Friday, March 11th

When I got home from school today, Mom was waiting for me with a package she said was a "very special present."



The first thing that went through my mind was that Mom bought me a new game controller to replace my broken one, but I shouldn't have let my hopes get that high.

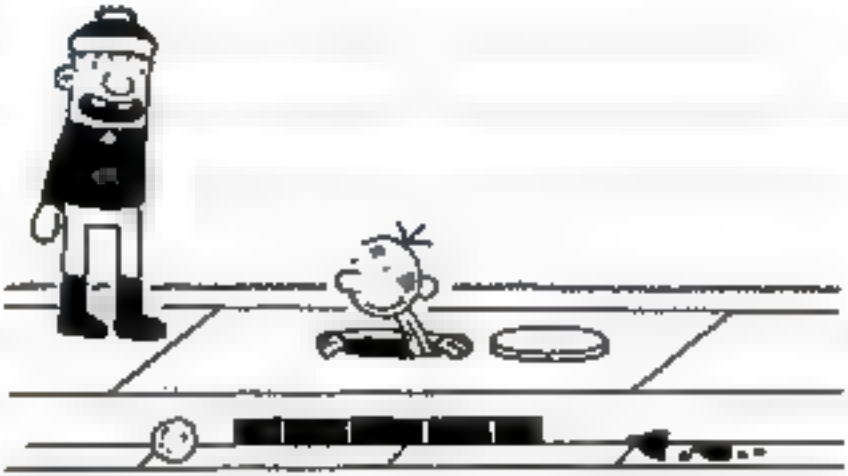
I went in my room and opened up the package, and here's what it was: two sticks of deodorant and a book.

I was confused at first, but then I realized what this was all about.

It's all because of what happened yesterday. After school, I decided I needed a way to get up to Rowley's without having to pass by Fregly's house. Fregly has been hanging out in his front yard again lately, and I'll tell you, he's getting weirder by the day.

So I decided to try something really crazy: to go through the sewer. Rodrick is always saying that a person could make it all the way from the bottom of the hill to the top of the hill through the sewer, so I decided to test his theory.

So I lifted up the sewer lid near my house, crawled inside, and made my way up to Rowley's. It was pretty dark and nasty in there, but it was still a whole lot better than having to deal with Fregly.



Anyway, I'm sure the reason Mom bought me the deodorant was because I came home smelling pretty funky. I guess she thought I was having a hygiene issue.

The book she got me was called "What's Happening to My Body." And let me tell you, after seeing the pictures in there, I'm cured of any curiousity I had about the whole Reproductive Health subject.

But the worst part of all was that I ended up being the topic of Mom's newspaper column again. We made a deal that she wouldn't use my actual name in her column anymore, but it wouldn't take a detective to figure out who she was talking about.

Ann Heffley

Puberty can be a difficult time

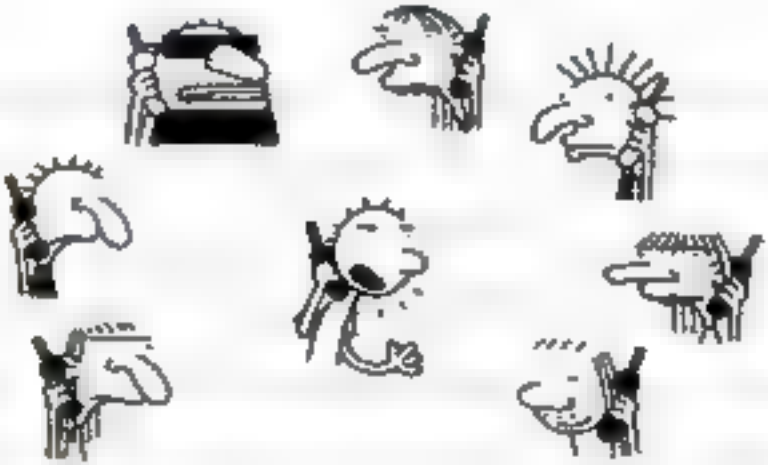
The changes that occur in a child's body can be confusing. But with proper parental guidance, a child can learn to welcome, and even celebrate, the changes that come with puberty. Recently, my 13-year-old son began to

Saturday, March 12th

This afternoon, Mom and Dad told me and Rodrick they were going to go away for the night. This was big news, because Mom and Dad have never left me and Rodrick at home on our own. They probably decided tonight was their big chance, because Rodrick has been knocked out with the flu for three days. And with him being so sick, there was no chance he was going to have a party. But that didn't stop Mom from giving Rodrick a big lecture about "responsibility" before taking off.

So Mom and Dad took Manny over to Gramma's, and me and Rodrick were home alone.

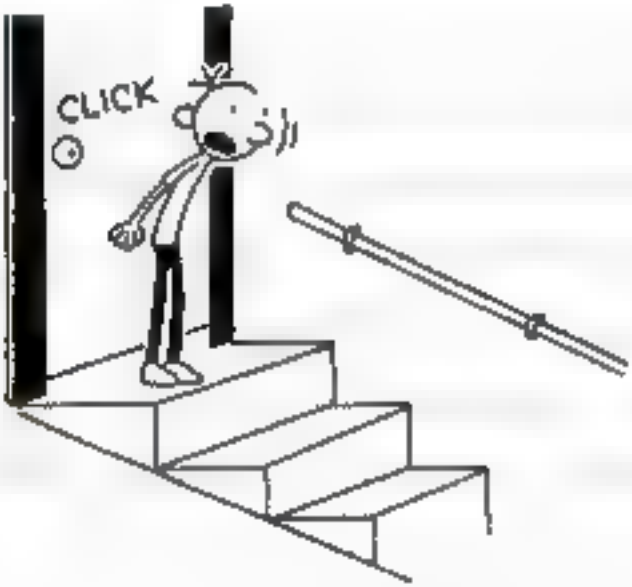
Rodrick has been so sick, I don't even think he's left the couch since Wednesday. But the second Mom and Dad walked out the door, Rodrick sprang into action. He got on the phone and called every person he knew. And he said the same thing over and over: Party at my house tonight. So I guess Mom and Dad weren't so smart after all.



Now, I could have called up Mom and Dad and ratted Rodrick out right away. But I've never been to a real high school party, so I figured I'd just keep my mouth shut and soak up all the fun.

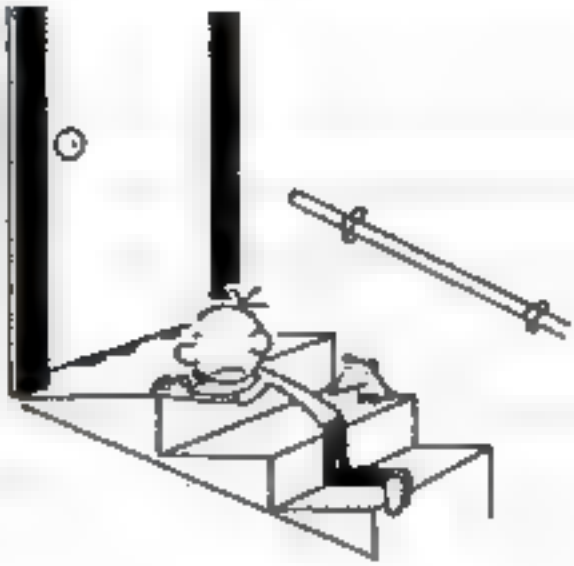
Rodrick's friends started to show up around 7:00, and before you knew it, there were cars parked up and down the street. Rodrick had me help get things set up like tables and chairs, and we were running around the house up to the last second.

But right before the party got started for real, Rodrick told me to go downstairs and make sure Sweetie had enough water in his bowl. And that's when things took a very bad turn for me.



Rodrick had gone and locked the basement door behind me. I should have known he would pull some dirty trick like that. I pounded on the door, but Rodrick just ignored me and cranked up the music. So I was stuck down there.

At around 8:00, some GIRLS showed up at the house. I have no idea how Rodrick and his friends got any girls to come to the party. I tried to keep tabs on the action, but all I could really see was the bottom of people's shoes.

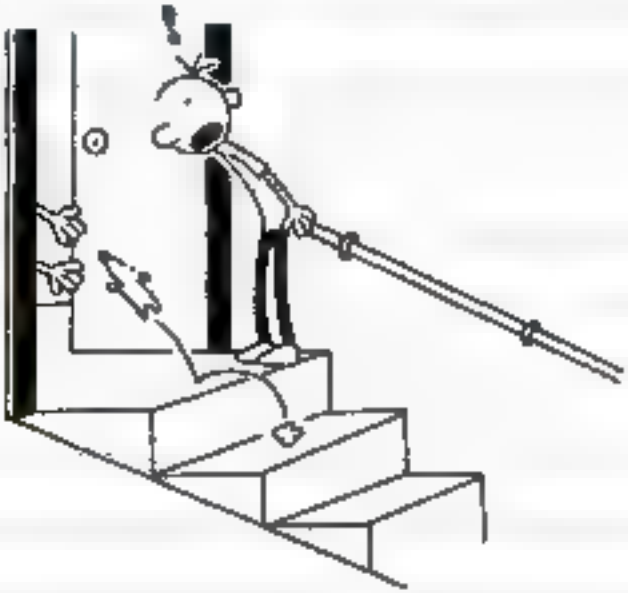


Later on in the night, I heard some girls talking near the basement door. They were looking at the pictures of my family on a shelf, and they were talking about somebody in the picture who was really cute.

I figured they were just talking about Manny until Rodrick walked over to the girls and said something to them. Then I realized the girls had been talking about ME.

When I heard the deadbolt unlock, I stepped back and got ready for my big moment.

But Rodrick just cracked the door a little bit, and Sweetie ran past me and into Rodrick's arms.



Then Rodrick slammed the door shut and locked the door again. And I knew I was stuck in the basement for the night.

It's 1:30 a.m. now, and the party is still going strong. I didn't get a chance to have any dinner before I got locked down here, so right now, I'm starved. I could eat just about anything.

I just hope I can fall asleep before I do something I end up regretting.

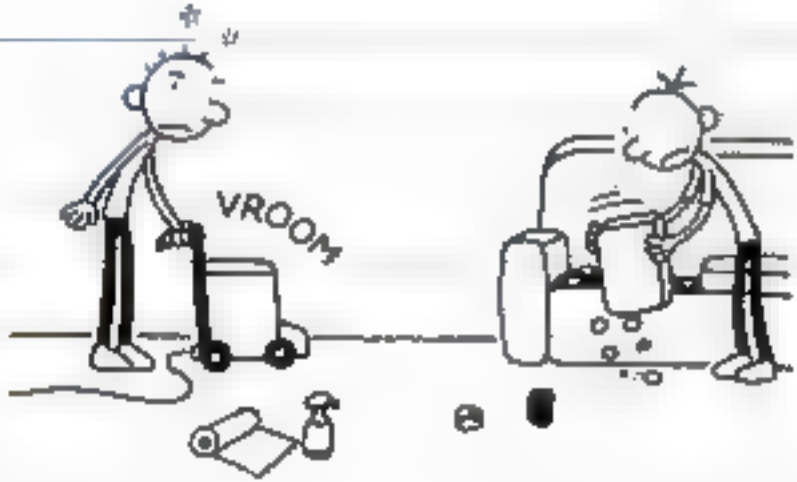
Sunday, March 13th

This morning, I woke up to the sound of Rodrick snoring. I figured since he was in his bed, it meant the basement door was unlocked. I walked upstairs and opened the door, and when I did, I felt like I had stepped into a disaster zone.

There was food and bottles and trash everywhere. And there were bodies all over the place, too. A bunch of Rodrick's friends had crashed on the floor.

It wasn't until 2:00 in the afternoon that everyone woke up and left the house. Rodrick didn't even come upstairs until 4:00. When he did come up, he told me I had to help him clean up, and I said no way. But he said I was a "willing participant" at the party, and that if he got busted, he was taking me down with him.

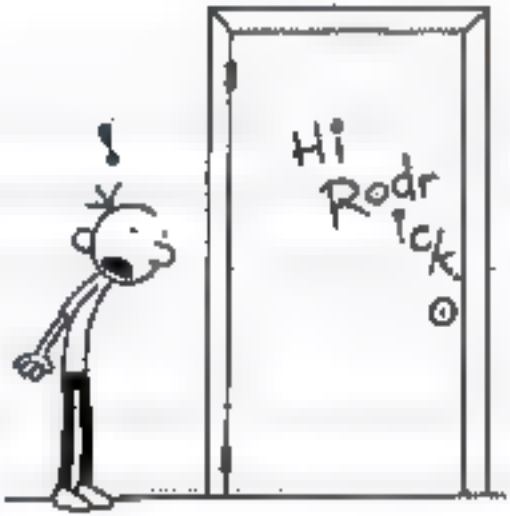
I couldn't tell if that really made any sense, but I didn't like the thought of Mom and Dad coming back and seeing their house trashed. So I decided to pitch in. Rodrick rented a steam cleaner for the carpets, and I started taking care of everything else.



Mom and Dad were due back by 7:00, so we were in a serious time crunch. It wasn't easy to erase all the evidence of the party. Rodrick's friends had left bottles and trash in crazy places. At one point, I poured myself a bowl of cereal, and about 25 bottle caps poured out.

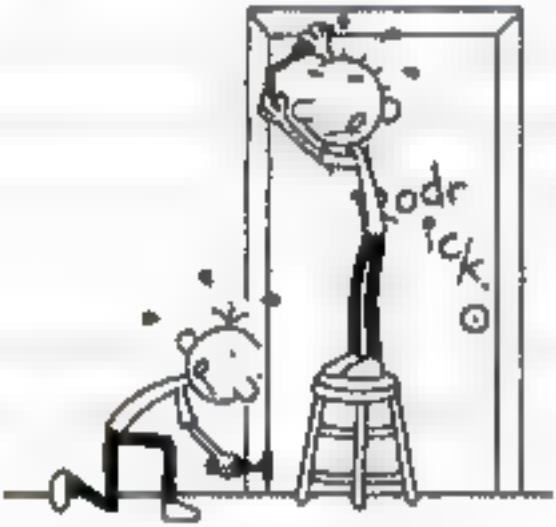
But by about 6:30, we had things pretty well wrapped up. I was glad the cleaning was over and I could relax.

I went upstairs to use the bathroom, and when I went to wash my hands, I saw what was on the inside of the door.

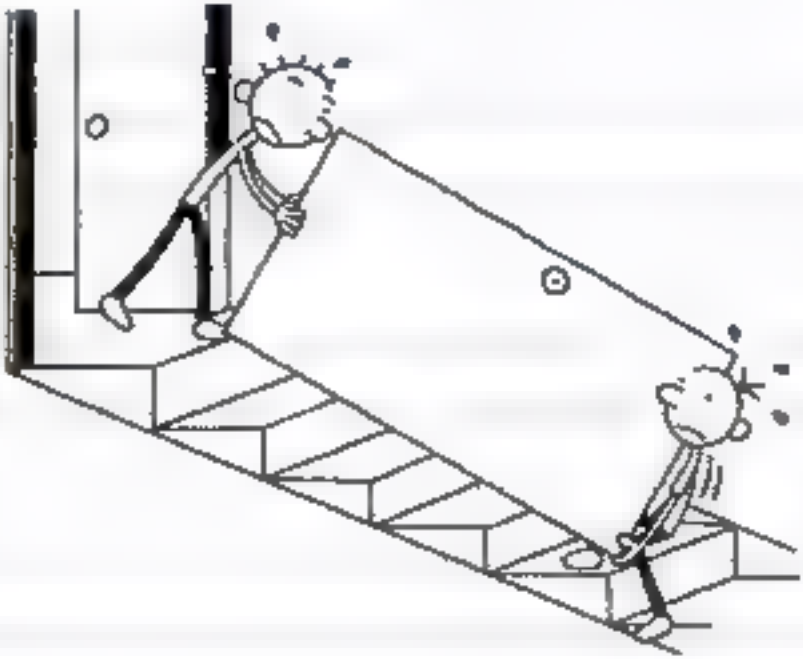


One of Rodrick's idiot friends had written a message on the door in huge letters. I tried to wash off the writing with soap and water, but apparently they had used permanent ink.

It was 6:45 now, and Mom and Dad were going to be home in 15 minutes. I went downstairs and told Rodrick about the door. I thought we were doomed. But Rodrick came up with a genius plan. He said we could take the door off its hinges and replace it with the closet door in the basement. So we got some screwdrivers and went to work.



We managed to get the door unhooked, and then we carried it down to the basement. Then we got the closet door from the basement and brought it upstairs to the bathroom.



We finished up with no time to spare. Mom and Dad's car rolled into the driveway just as we were screwing in the last hinge.

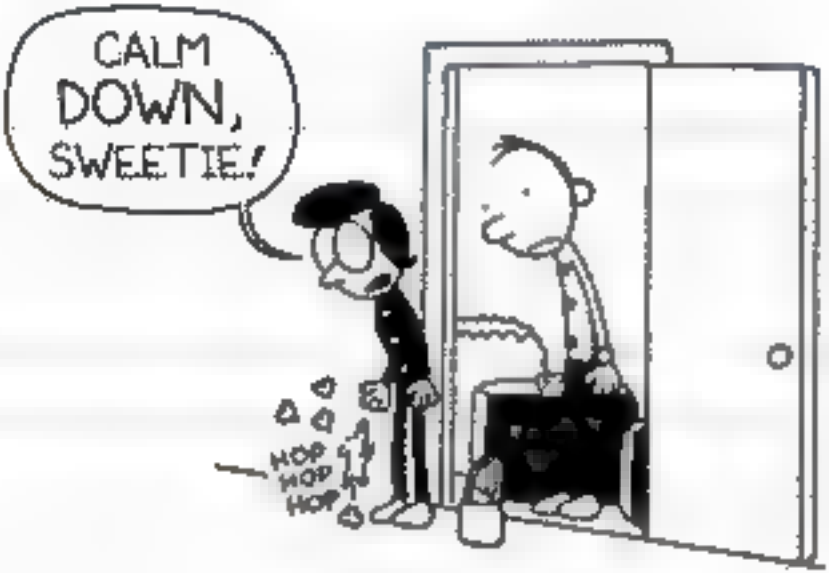
I have to admit, for a couple of guys who aren't very handy, it was pretty impressive work.

Mom and Dad walked in the door, and you could tell they were relieved to see that the house hadn't burned down while they were away.

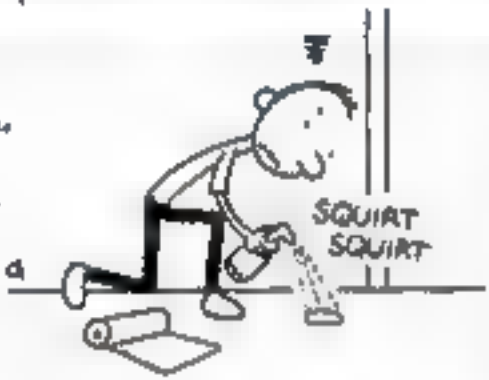
So hopefully this means more weekend trips for them in the future. But believe me, if Rodrick has another party, I'm not setting foot in the basement.

Monday, March 14th

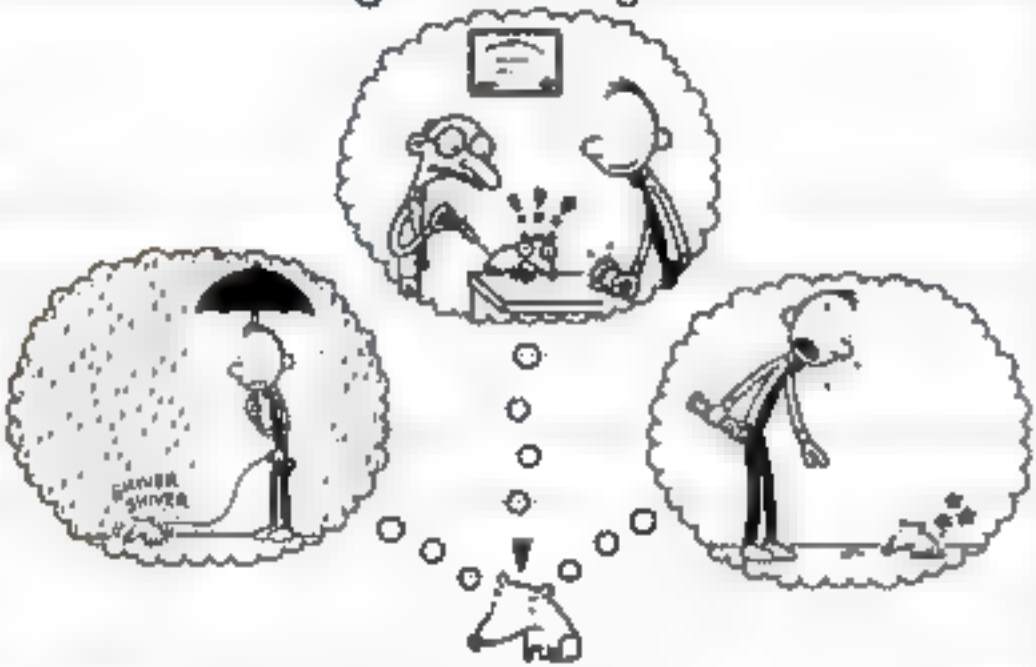
Last night, when Mom and Dad got home from their trip, Sweetie just about went crazy. He was so excited to see Mom that he lost control of himself and wet all over the floor.



It still really burns Dad up that Sweetie doesn't give him the same kind of affection he gives to Mom. So ever since he got home last night, Dad's been in a really foul mood.



It's no mystery to me why Sweetie doesn't like Dad. And if Sweetie could talk, I'm sure he'd love to share his feelings on the subject with Dad.

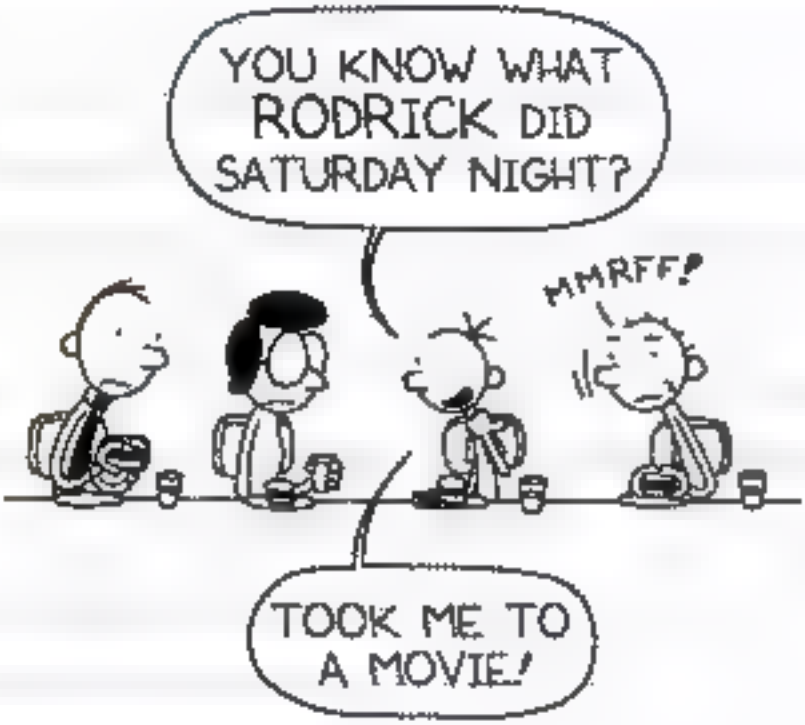


You know who Sweetie DOES like, besides Mom? Rowley. Whenever Rowley comes over, Sweetie won't leave him alone. I don't know if it's the type of deodorant Rowley wears or what, but there's just something about that boy that makes Sweetie go absolutely bonkers.

So my advice to Dad is to be careful what you wish for.

On top of Dad being in a bad mood, I think he's still suspicious Rodrick had a party while he was away. I've seen him poking around here and there, and it's just a matter of time before he finds the clue he needs to nail Rodrick.

In the mean time, I'm having a lot of fun at Rodrick's expense. It's great to finally be the one with all the power.



Tuesday, March 15th

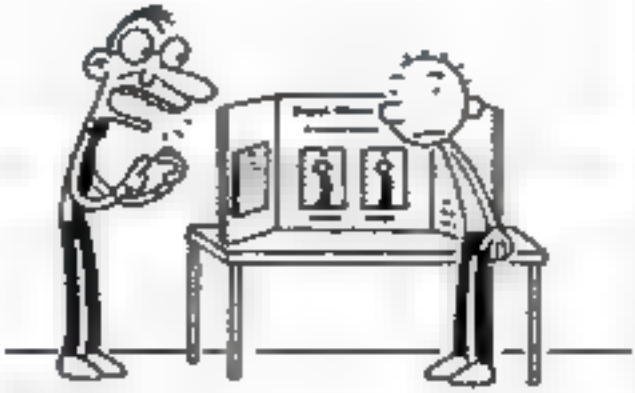
Remember how me and Rodrick switched the bathroom door with the closet door after the party? Well, I had forgotten all about it, until tonight.

Rodrick was in my room when Dad walked down the hall to use the bathroom. And all of the sudden, Dad said something that made my blood run cold.

Rodrick went white as a ghost. When we switched the doors the other day, we didn't even THINK about whether or not the closet door had a lock on it.

I thought we were dead ducks. Now that Dad knew about the door, it was only a matter of time before Dad found out about the party, too. But luckily, Dad didn't put two and two together, and we were off the hook a few seconds later.

Rodrick was especially relieved, because he had been having a pretty bad day. You know that science fair project he was working on, where he wanted to see if he could grow by keeping his body horizontal as much as possible? Well, his teacher shut his project down today. After two months of lying around almost constantly, Rodrick had grown an eighth of an inch, and he was really proud. But when he showed his teacher his findings, the teacher said that's a normal amount for a boy Rodrick's age to grow during that time.



So now Rodrick has 24 hours to come up with a new science fair project, from scratch. And Dad's made it real clear to Rodrick that he's on his own for this one.

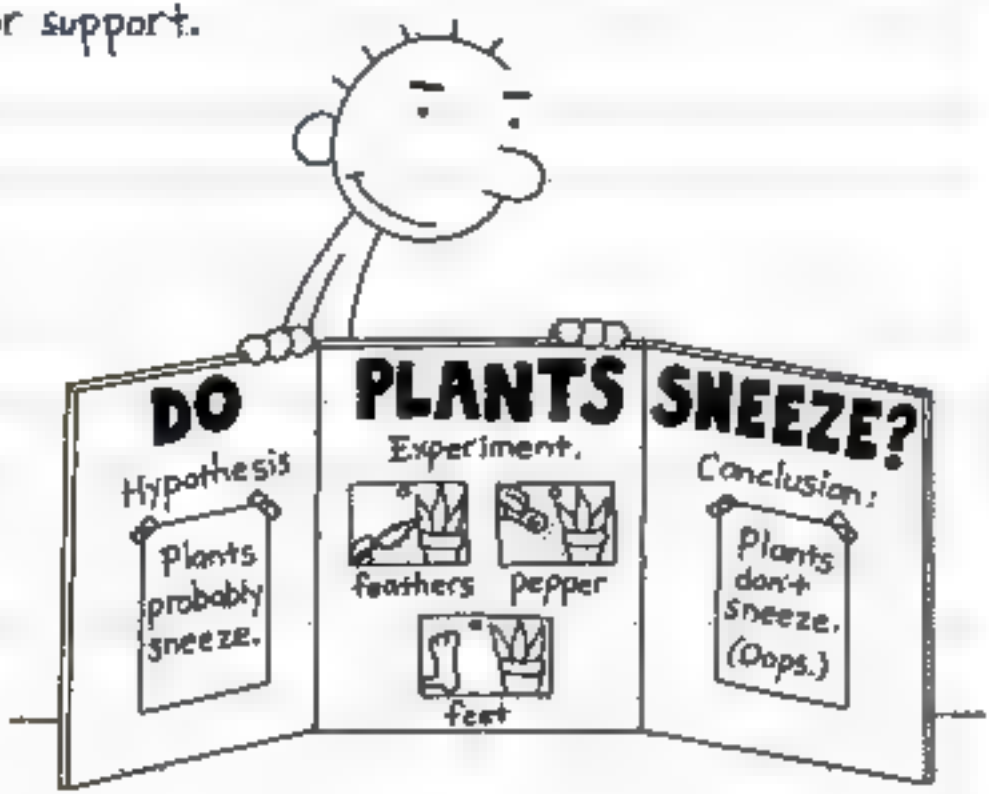
Wednesday, March 16th

You know, there's a real downside to having a bathroom door that doesn't lock. Every time I try to have a few minutes of privacy, Sweetie noses his way into the bathroom and harrasses me.

And there's not a whole lot you can do when you're in a situation like that. I just try to stay perfectly still until Sweetie loses interest and leaves. I'm pretty tempted to switch the doors again just so things can go back to normal.

Tonight, Mom made the whole family go to Rodrick's science fair. Believe it or not, Rodrick actually came through and finished his project on time, without any help from Mom or Dad.

Rodrick was really proud of himself, and Mom wanted the whole family to come out and show him our support.



Rodrick didn't win any ribbons or anything, and he was pretty mad. On the way home, he kept saying he got robbed.

Even though Rodrick's project was pretty lame, I almost have to agree with him. Because the guy who won it all actually put less effort into his project than Rodrick did.

Thursday, March 17th

Today is St. Patrick's Day, which is one of my least favorite holidays. Rodrick is one of those guys who makes you pay if you're not wearing green, and sure enough, before I even had a chance to put on any clothes, he got me.

On most days, wild horses couldn't drag Rodrick out of bed. But on St. Patrick's Day, Rodrick is up at the crack of dawn to make sure he gets his licks in.

I keep telling Rodrick that on St. Patrick's Day, if you catch someone not wearing green, you're supposed to PINCH them, not punch them.

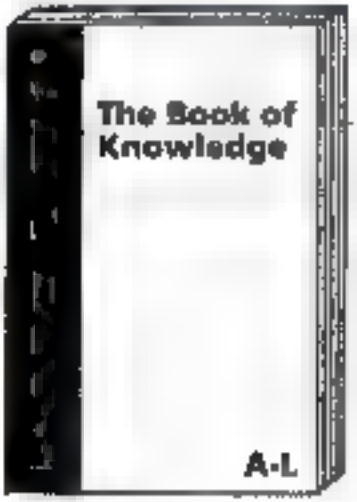
But he can't seem to get it through his thick head.

Next year, I'll have to remember to wear some green socks or something before I go to bed, because this is getting ridiculous.

Remembering to wear green was the least of my worries today. Tomorrow is our last day of school before Spring Break, and that means my big Science paper is due. I've had about three weeks to work on it, but I've spent all my Free Study time in the library goofing off.

We're studying Animals of North America, and our assignment is to do a four-page paper on a specific animal. Everyone got assigned a random animal, and I got "Moose."

I really wish I didn't burn up all of my library time, because now I'm in a real bind. The only reference book we have in the house is part one of a two-part encyclopedia, and it doesn't even go up to "M."



I've been using that encyclopedia to bail me out for the past few years. Usually, I get lucky when the teacher hands out assignments.

Last quarter, in Geography, I barely made the cut. So I guess I should have figured it was a matter of time before my luck ran out.

Friday, March 18th

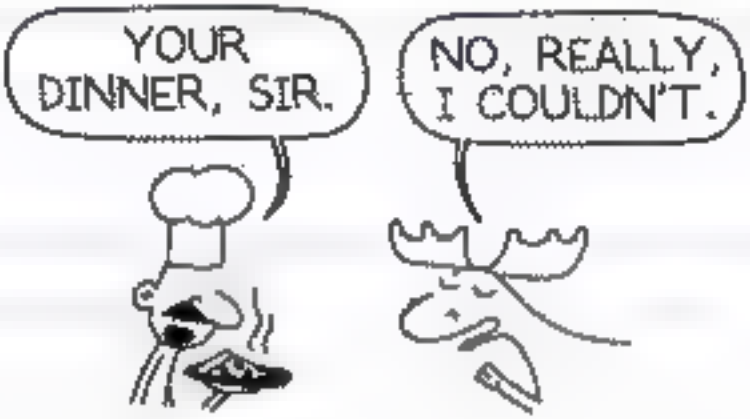
Well, I finished my Moose paper on time, even though I didn't have a whole lot of information to work with. But I think I did a pretty good job of hiding what I didn't know.

The Amazing Moose

by Greg Heffley

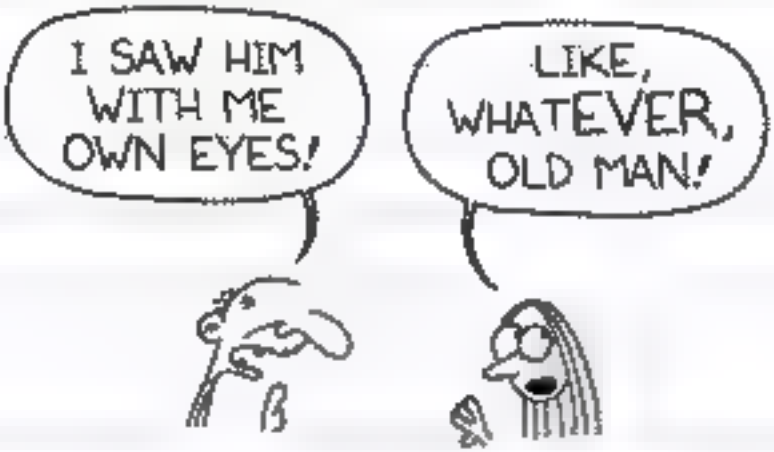
Diet: The moose eats many, many things, and the list would be too long to mention in this paper. But here are some things you will never see a moose eat:

BUBBLE GUM METAL PIZZA

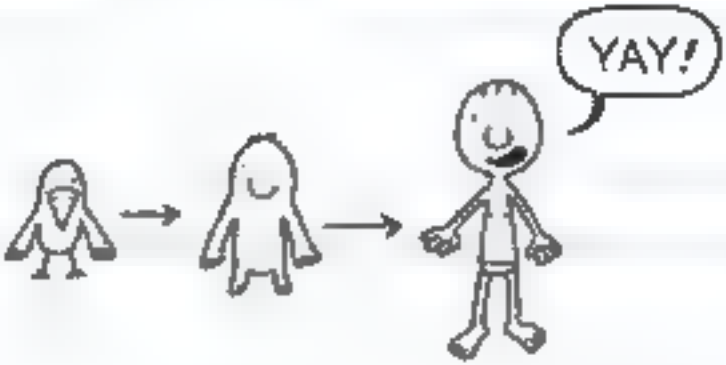


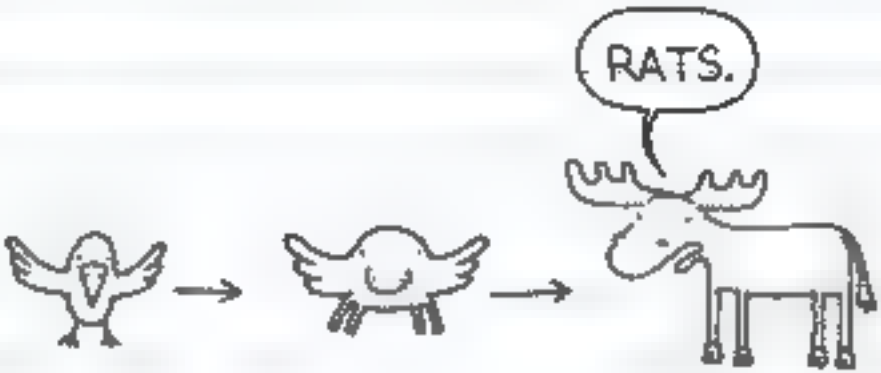
Habitat. The moose lives in all the regular places you would expect a moose to live, and some places you might not.

There is one guy who claims to have seen a moose in the Sahara Desert, but not many people believe the guy because he is old and a little bit crazy



Origin: Everyone knows that moose evolved from birds, just like people did. But somewhere along the line people got arms and moose got stuck with those useless horns.





The only legitimate fact I had about the moose came from a book I found in Rodrick's junk drawer called "Dumb Animals." Mom always says that when you write a paper, you should conclude it with your strongest material. So that's exactly what I did.

Intelligence. Moose are not among the world's brightest creatures. When frightened, a moose will hide behind the nearest tree. A moose thinks you can't see it if it can't see you.

Saturday, March 19th

A miracle happened today. I got an invitation to Kristina Erickson's annual Spring Break party. If you're a kid in my grade, getting handed an invitation to Kristina Erickson's party is better than being given a winning lottery ticket.

You're Invited

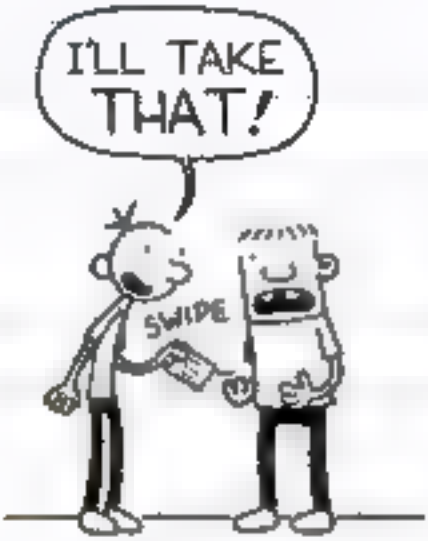
to a Party!

Where: Kristina's Erickson's house
13 Surrey Circle

When: Friday March 25th

I've never actually been to one of Kristina's parties, but I know everything that's ever happened at them. Kristina's party is all anyone talks about for two weeks after Spring Break.

I didn't technically get invited to Kristina's party... Rowley did. But since Rowley will be away on a trip for Spring Break, I figured he wouldn't be needing his invitation.



Usually, only the most popular kids get invited to Kristina's party. But this year, Kristina is on the safety patrols, so I guess she decided to invite all the other patrols along. Otherwise, Rowley wouldn't have stood a chance of getting invited.

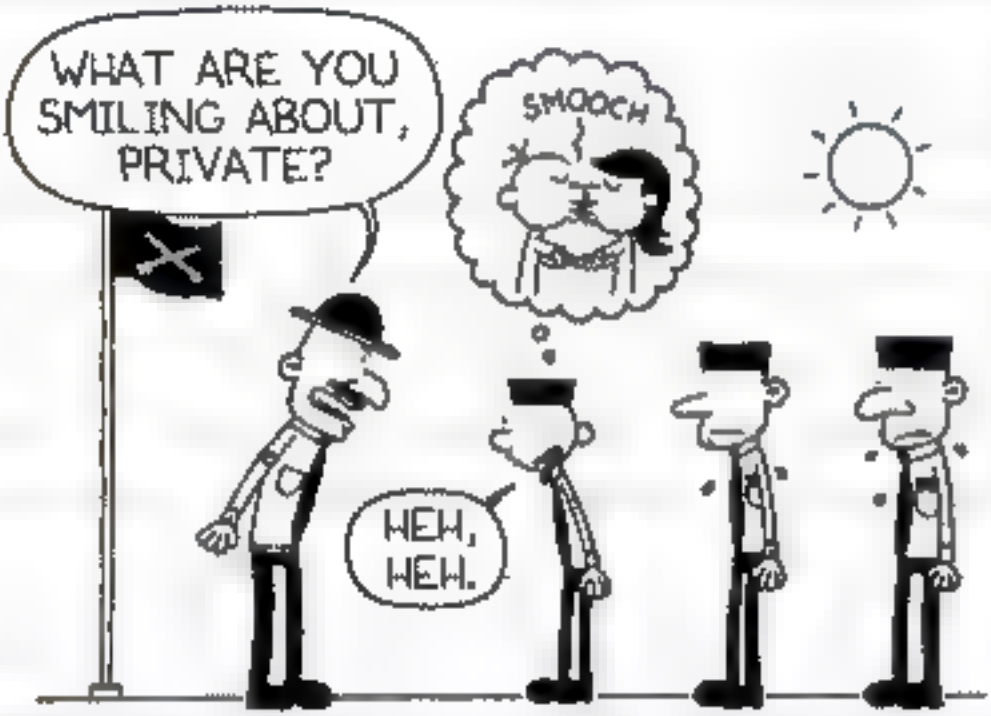
I heard last year's party was totally out of control. Apparently, there's zero adult supervision at these things.

But the reason I'm looking forward to the party is because they always have these marathon games of Spin the Bottle in the basement, and I've never played Spin the Bottle before.

I'll bet Charlotte Dampier and Andrea Stiles are going to be at this year's party, and if you ask me, that's a pretty good start.

Another reason I'm excited about going to this party is that if I'm going to get sent off to military academy when I hit the 9th grade, I might as well live it up in the meantime.

Besides, maybe Spag Union won't even be that bad if I have a few good memories to take with me.



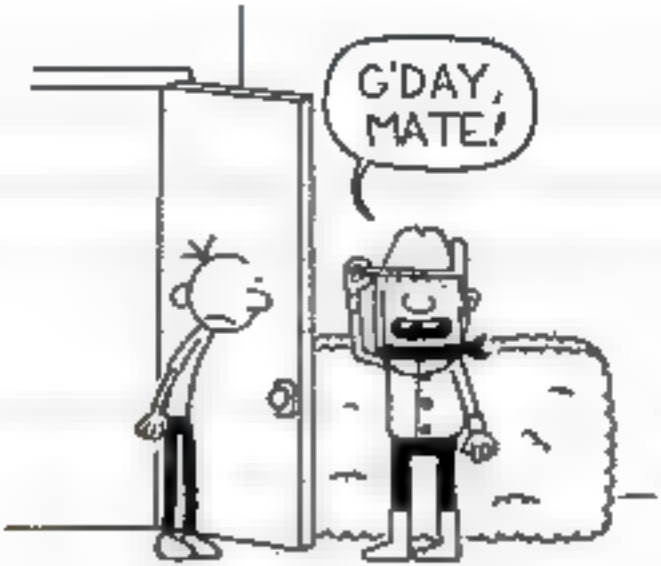
Sunday, March 20th

Well, Rowley is leaving for his trip tomorrow, so I don't know what I'm supposed to do for the next eight days. I'm not even really sure where Rowley is going for his trip. He tried to tell me all about it, but to be honest with you, I had trouble paying attention.

I don't know if it makes me a bad person, but I just can't get excited about someone else's vacation.

Plus, Rowley is always going off to some exotic place with his family, and I can't keep all his trips straight.

The other reason I can't get excited about Rowley's vacations is that when he comes back, he always crams his trip down your throat. Last summer, Rowley went to Australia for a few weeks, but from the way he acted when he got back, you would think he had lived there his whole life.

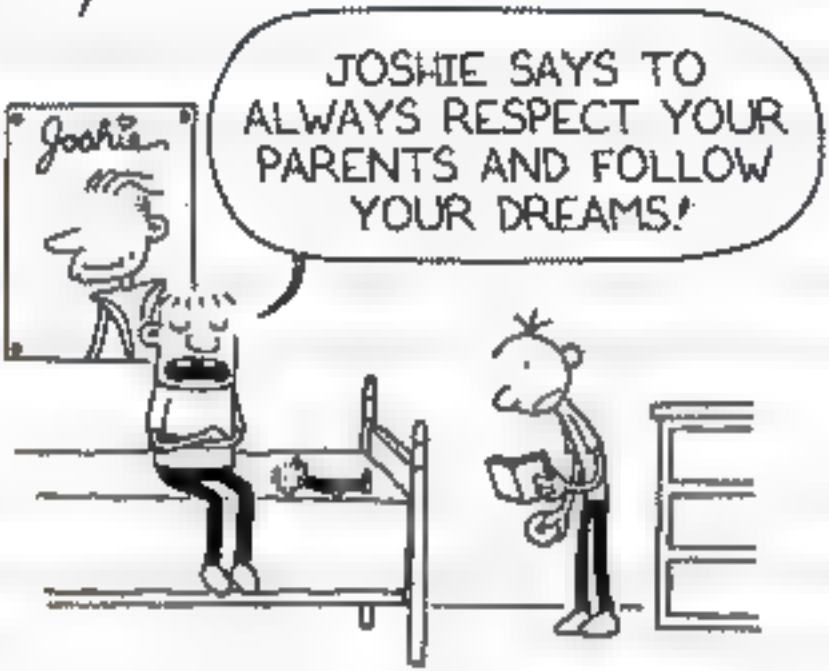


Another thing Rowley does that's really annoying is that when he goes someplace new, he gets hooked on whatever fad is going on over there and then tries to get me into it, too.

When he got back from Europe last Spring Break, he couldn't stop talking about this pop singer called "Joshie" who is apparently a huge star over there.

I took one look at the CD case and knew it wasn't my type of music.

I told Rowley I thought Joshie's target audience was 8-year-old girls, but he didn't want to hear it. He said I was just jealous he "discovered" Joshie before I did. In fact, I couldn't say anything bad about Joshie at all, because this guy was Rowley's new hero.



I just hope Joshie isn't big in the country Rowley's visiting for Spring Break, because I don't know if I can take hearing about him all over again.

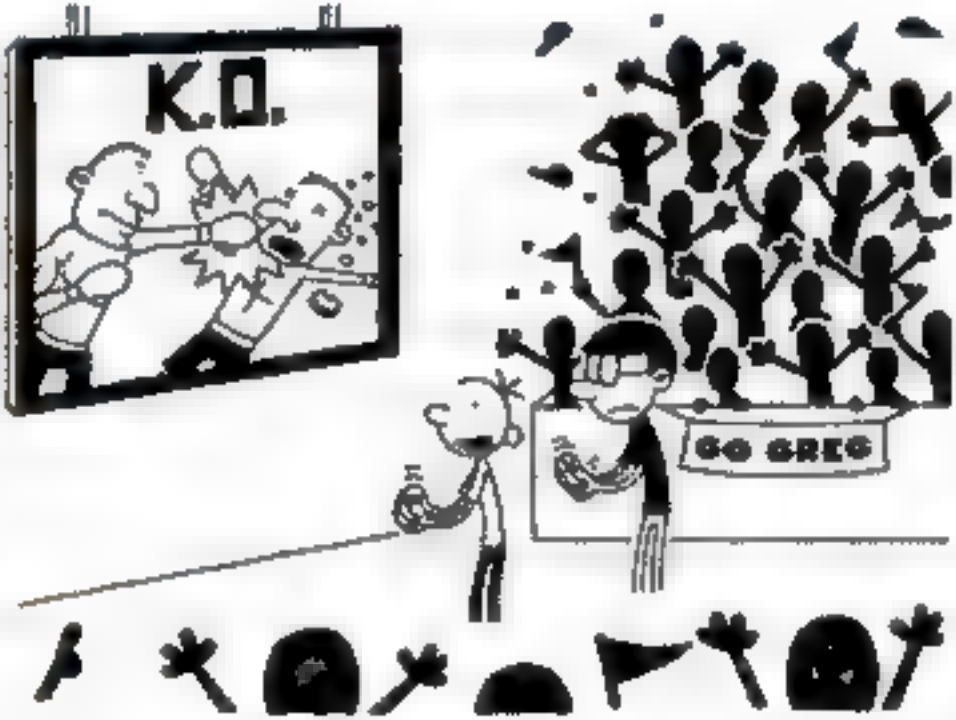
Monday, March 21st

This morning, I went down to Electronics Hut to return some games, and there was a poster in the window that stopped me cold.

The store is having a video game tournament ten days from now, and the winner gets 50 bucks. But's that not even the best part. The winner also gets a entered into a drawing for a chance to face off against Xiao Cheng, who is like a god in the video game world.

I've been following Xiao Cheng's career ever since I can remember. That guy is some kind of video game genius. One time he beat seven nationally-ranked Deathmatch players at the SAME TIME.

Nobody has ever beaten Xiao Cheng in ANY competition. But I figure eventually someone's going to get lucky and beat him, and it might as well be me.

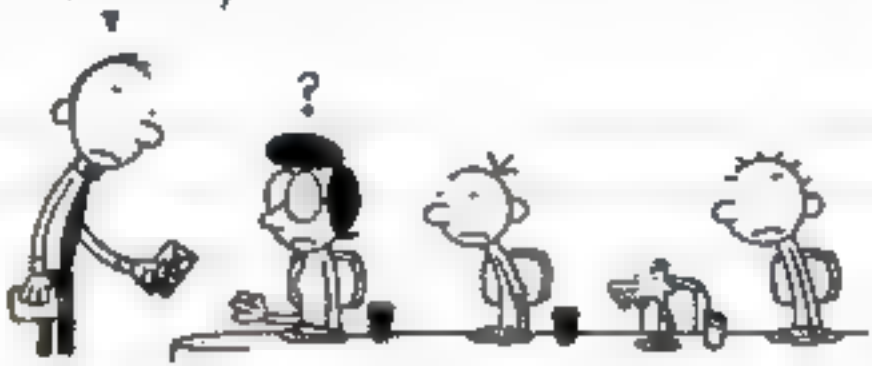


This tournament could be my big chance. These guys on the video game circuit are like rock stars, travelling all over the world to play. And if things go my way, I can guarantee you I won't have to worry about any Spag Union.

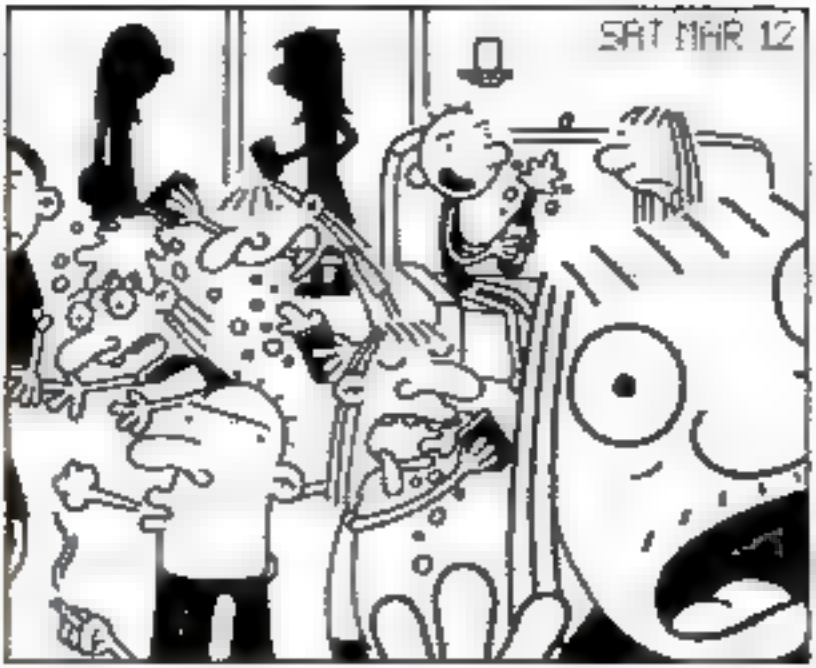
Just when it looked like it couldn't possibly get any better for me, it did. Mom told me and Rodrick we don't have to go with her and Dad to Uncle Gary's wedding this weekend, since we proved we could be trusted on our own in the house. So now I've got ten days of pure video game practice in front of me.

Tuesday, March 22nd

Tonight, Dad was home from work later than usual because Mom asked him to stop by the photo place on the way home to pick up her prints. But when Dad walked in the door, you could tell he was not very happy about something. He handed Mom one of the pictures, and when she looked at it, she got really mad, too.



I looked over Mom's shoulder, and when I saw the picture she was holding, I couldn't believe my eyes. The picture was of Rodrick's party. It looked like Bill must have taken it, and judging from the look on his face, my guess is that he took it by accident.



Mom keeps her camera up on a shelf right next to the stereo. I'm guessing Bill accidentally pressed the button, and when he did, he captured the whole scene.

When Mom and Dad showed Rodrick the picture, he tried to talk his way out of it, but there was no use. There was so much incriminating evidence in that one picture that Rodrick knew his goose was cooked.

It didn't take Mom and Dad long to come up with Rodrick's punishment. They took his car keys away and told him he was grounded for a month. And get this: They were mad at ME, even though I didn't have anything to do with the party. Mom said that since I knew about it and didn't tell them, I was Rodrick's "accomplice." So I got hit with a two-week video game ban.

This is huge, because it means all my practice time for the tournament is completely out the window. Plus, Mom said that tomorrow, me and Rodrick have to come along with her and Dad to Uncle Gary's wedding, since we proved we can't be trusted on our own. I was really mad about the whole situation, but Rodrick didn't seem too phased. He was just happy Dad got double prints, because until today, he didn't have any pictures from his party.

Wednesday, March 23rd

We hit the road for Uncle Gary's wedding at 9:00 this morning. We had to rent a station wagon for our trip, since neither one of our cars could fit the whole family and all our stuff.

When we got on the highway, me and Rodrick started playing "Punch Buggy." But about two minutes into the game, it turned violent, and Mom separated us. Then she divided the back seat into invisible "zones" and told us we weren't allowed to leave our assigned areas. She told Manny that if me or Rodrick crossed out of our zones, he needed to let her know.

Mom's zone idea worked out pretty well in terms of keeping the peace. But now that we were banned from playing Punch Buggy, I didn't have anything to do but stare out the window.

I wasn't allowed to bring my Game Boy, because I was grounded from playing video games. So I had packed a book to keep me busy. But Mom confiscated it as soon as I got it out to read.

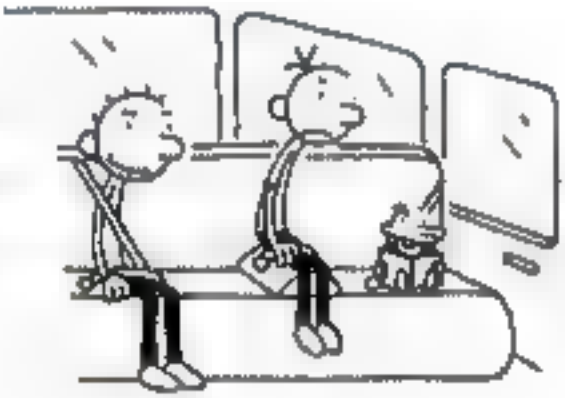
Mom took the book away from me because she said it looked too "racy." I guess she didn't approve of the picture of the woman on the front cover. What really stinks is that there aren't even any women characters IN the book. In fact, from what I've read so far, I seriously doubt the guy who drew the cover ever talked to the guy who wrote the thing.

The raciest the book ever gets is when Uldroch, a dwarf, tries to go to the bathroom in the woods but gets attacked by a swarm of black flies and comes running back to camp.

About three hours into the trip, Rodrick started whispering to Manny, telling him that he was getting the shaft for being stuck with the middle zone. Rodrick pointed out that Manny's zone was at least five inches narrower than mine.

A few minutes earlier, Manny was happy as a clam about getting to sit on the hump. But the next thing you knew, he was in hysterics over the size of his zone.

Manny was so out of control, Dad had to pull the car over. To solve the problem, Mom said that for the rest of the trip, me and Manny had to take turns sitting on the hump.



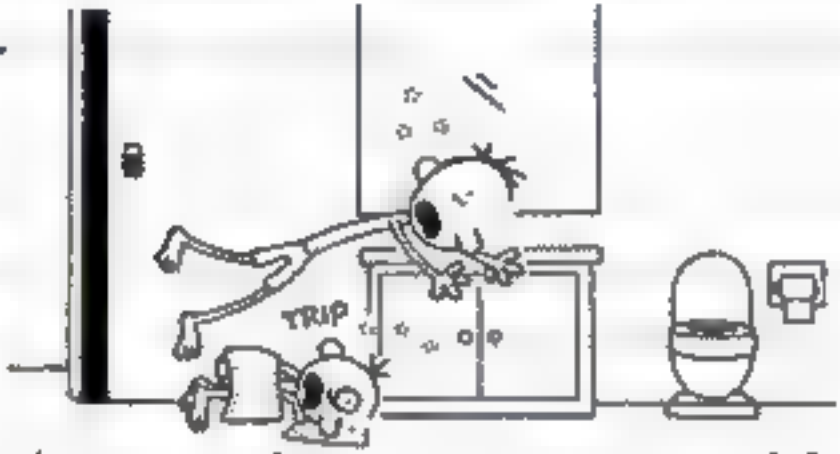
By the time we got to the hotel at 6:00 tonight, I was practically unconscious from bumping my head on the roof of the car.

And then I found out some bad news: Mom only booked ONE hotel room for all five of us. Manny is going be in Mom and Dad's bed. But if Mom thinks I'm sharing the other bed with Rodrick, she has to be out of her mind.

Thursday, March 24th

Mom's decision to have everyone in the family share a single hotel room wasn't such a bright idea.

I started out sleeping on the floor in between the two beds, but I packed up and moved when everyone started snoring. I made a spot for myself on the bathroom floor, and I was actually pretty happy in there for a while. But that changed when Dad stumbled into the bathroom in the middle of the night.

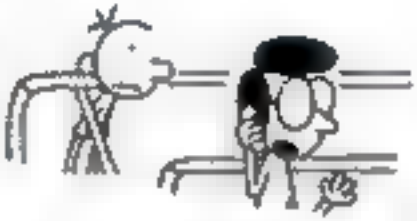


It took a minute for me to untangle myself from Dad, who was pretty disoriented. After that, I decided to just pick up and move into the closet.

When I woke up this morning, my back was killing me from being crammed into a three-foot space.

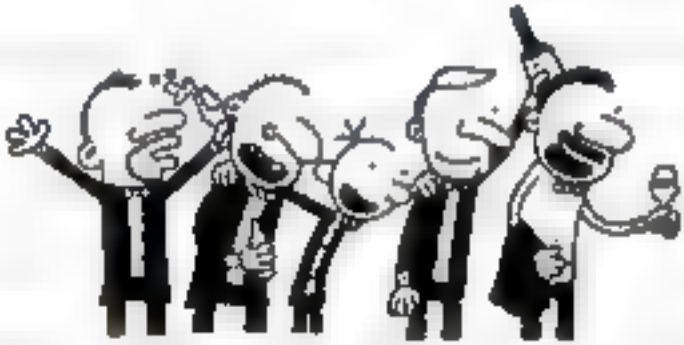
I was planning on lying down in the way back of the station wagon to stretch myself out, but Rodrick beat me to the punch. He climbed back there before I had a chance to get in the car, and he went right to sleep. I can't complain too much, though, because with Rodrick in the back, at least I had a seat to myself.

During our drive, Mom did a lot of talking on the cell phone, making final plans for the wedding on Saturday. I heard her make an appointment to measure me for a tuxedo, and that definitely perked my ears up.



When Mom got off the phone, I asked her why I had to wear a tuxedo. She told me Uncle Gary picked me to be in the wedding party.

I've never been in a wedding party before. But I do know that the night before the wedding, all the groomsmen throw a wild bash for the groom. And I've seen enough cable television to know that's something I need to be a part of.



Mostly, though, I was just relieved I wasn't going to have to be a Reader again. Uncle Gary has been married three times, and he's picked me to do the Old Testament reading at each one of his weddings.

Don't ask me what adults are thinking when they pick kids to do these readings. I guess it's just for the entertainment value.

I don't know why I got picked to be in the wedding party, but Rodrick didn't. But I'll keep my fingers crossed that Rodrick has to sub for me as the Reader.

Friday, March 25th

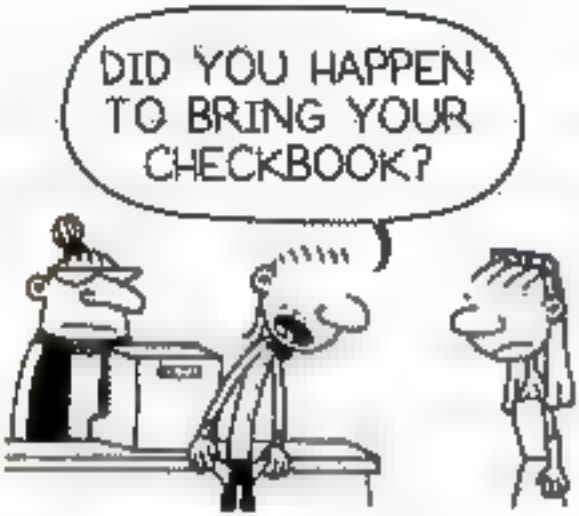
Tonight was Uncle Gary's wedding rehearsal. Everyone was supposed to be at the church at 7:00, but Uncle Gary didn't show up until 8:45. And from the looks of it, he came straight to the church from work.

Uncle Gary has a job where he dresses up as a dinosaur for kids' birthday parties. I guess it's a good sign that Uncle Gary's fiancée Linda knows about his job and is still willing to marry him.

One of the reasons Uncle Gary's last marriage didn't work out is because Cindy, the woman who married him, thought he was rich, but found out later that he wasn't.

It all happened because of a pretty innocent misunderstanding. On their fourth or fifth date, Cindy brought up the subject of money, and she told Uncle Gary how much she had in her bank account. So then Uncle Gary told Cindy how much money he had in HIS.

It turned out Uncle Gary only had 70 dollars in his bank account, not 70 thousand. And Cindy didn't find out about it until it was time to pay the bar tab at the wedding.



Hopefully Uncle Gary's marriage will make it past the honeymoon this time around.

All the people in the wedding party were at the rehearsal tonight. There were some pretty good-looking bridesmaids, so I couldn't wait to see which one I was going to get paired up with.

During the rehearsal, I kept expecting one of the groomsmen to take me aside and let me know where the bachelor's party was going to be tonight, but that never happened.

After a while, I started to get a little suspicious about what my exact role in the wedding was going to be.

So I picked up a wedding program, but I didn't see my name in the list of groomsmen. In fact, I didn't see my name anywhere until I scanned all the way to the bottom of the back page.

Ringbearer/Flower Boy . ... Manny Heffley
Assistant Flower Boy. ... . Greg Heffley

Please no flash photography in the church

My eyes just about bugged out of my head when I found out what my job was. I guess I should have seen it coming, since the tuxedo Mom had me fitted for tonight was light pink.

But that wasn't even the low point of my night. All day today, I kept feeling like there was some place else I was supposed to be, but I couldn't figure out where.

And then, during the rehearsal dinner, it hit me: Tonight was Kristina Erickson's party!

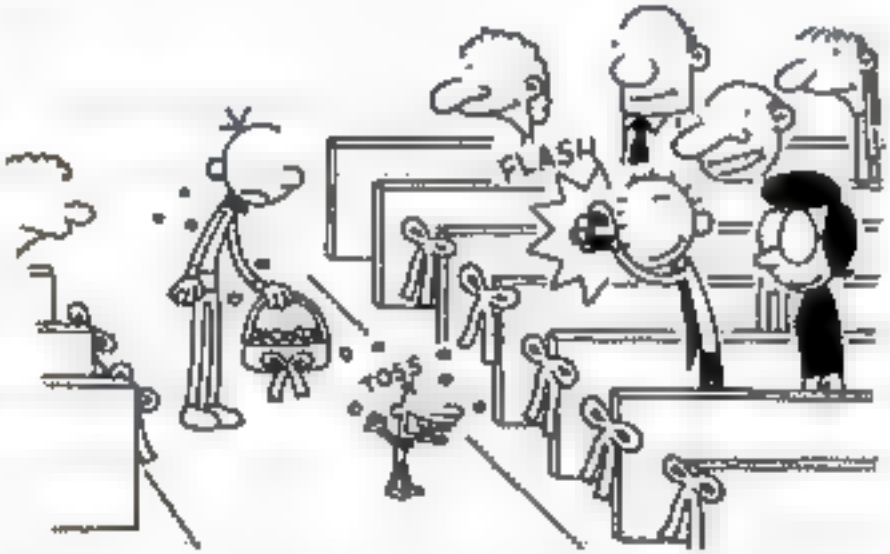
I couldn't believe I was stuck at a stupid rehearsal dinner when I should have been playing Spin the Bottle in Kristina Erickson's basement, three states away.

During the dinner, I took Mom's phone out of her purse and snuck out of the room. I called Collin, because he lives next door to Kristina. I told him he needed to spy on the party for me to let me know everything I was missing. He could see everything that was going on at Kristina's from his kitchen.

I must have called Collin ten times tonight. I was hoping that if I got regular updates, it would be almost as good as being there. But somehow, it just wasn't the same.

Saturday, March 26th

Well, today was Uncle Gary's wedding, and to be honest with you, I'm glad it's over with. My job as Assistant Flower Boy was to march down the aisle behind Manny, holding a basket of flower petals. It's an experience I just want to put behind me and forget, but something tells me Rodrick isn't going to let that happen.



Luckily, the wedding itself didn't take too long. I guess the third time you get married, they give you the hurry-up ceremony.

After the wedding came the reception, where they have dinner and cake and all that. Before we started eating, Uncle Gary's Best Man, Ron, stood up and gave a toast.

Ron said he had a really funny story about Uncle Gary and Linda from when they were dating, and he wanted to share it with everyone.

A couple of months ago, Uncle Gary took Linda to a football game. Ron said that Uncle Gary was actually planning on breaking up with Linda, because he was hoping he could start dating her sister instead.

But before Uncle Gary could have the break-up talk with Linda, a plane flew across the sky pulling a banner behind it.

There must have been some other guy in the stadium who had a girlfriend named Linda that he wanted to propose to. But Uncle Gary's Linda saw the banner, and that was that.

Ron said that Uncle Gary was afraid that if he told Linda he didn't want to marry her, the guys in the seats behind him might beat him up. So instead, he just went with it. The stadium even put him and Linda up on the JumboTron.

At first, I thought Ron's story was just a joke. But Uncle Gary wasn't exactly jumping out of his chair to say it wasn't true.

I don't really know what happened after that, because we had to leave the reception early to get back on the road. But judging from where things stood when we left, my guess is that we'll be back here next year for Uncle Gary wedding number four.

Mom wanted to be back at our house in time for Easter, so she decided we'd do the drive in one big push without spending the night anywhere. We left right from the church. Rodrick got in the way back again, so I was in the middle seat with Manny.

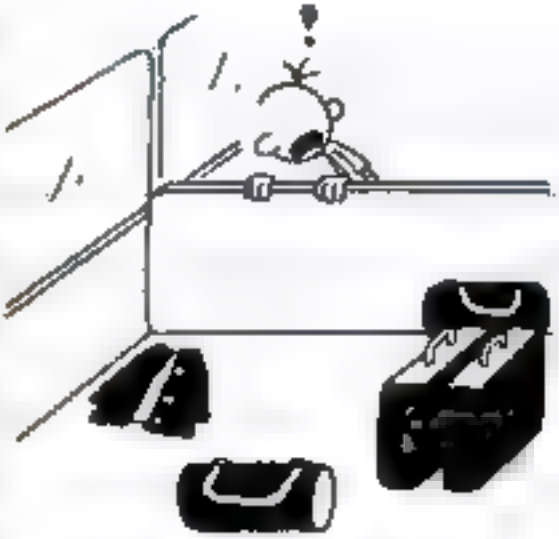
Once we got going, Manny started telling some of his made-up jokes. He's been in a big joke-telling phase lately, and unfortunately, Mom and Dad don't do anything to discourage him.

I think Manny *must* have eaten a couple packets of sugar at the reception or something, because after four or five hours, he was still going strong. It got to the point where his jokes didn't even make any sense at all. Even Mom and Dad seemed burned out on Manny's comedy.

Eventually, I guess Mom decided she needed a break from Manny, so she told Dad to pull the car over. Then she made Rodrick take her seat in the front of the wagon, and she went to sleep in the back.

Later on, we stopped at a rest stop to get some gas and snacks. I bought a giant Big Gulp of Coke, which was a mistake, because it kept me awake for Manny's jokes.

About an hour after that, Dad needed to talk to Mom so she could tell him what turn to take next. So he told me to wake Mom up and ask her. But when I looked in the back of the car, Mom wasn't there!



The only sign of Mom was her coat, which she had been using as a pillow. I told Dad that Mom wasn't in the car, and he slammed on his brakes so hard that the car behind us almost hit us.

Dad pulled over to the side of the road, and we tried to figure out where Mom was. We realized that when we pulled over at the rest stop, Mom must have gotten out to use the bathroom, and no one noticed. So Dad turned the car around, and we backtracked all the way to the rest stop. And sure enough, there was Mom, at Exit 42.

Luckily, Manny slept the rest of the way back. Because believe me, Mom was not in a laughing mood.

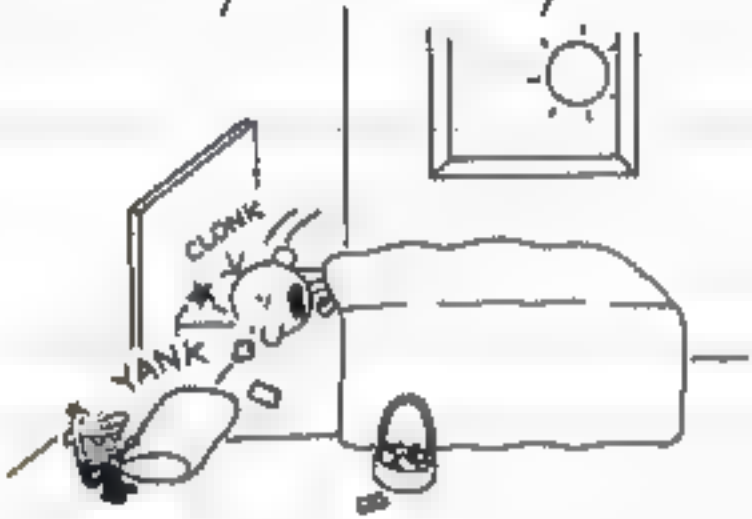
Sunday, March 27th (Easter)

We didn't get back home from our trip until 3:00 in the morning. I dove into bed with all my clothes on. So the last thing on my mind before I fell asleep was that today was Easter.

Every Easter, Mom makes a basket for Manny. Dad hides the basket, and then writes up these little clues like they're from the Easter Bunny. Manny was going around following his clues this morning.

I hid the next clue
In somebody's bed
It's under a pillow
'Neath your brother's _ _ _ _.

So that's how my Easter Sunday started.

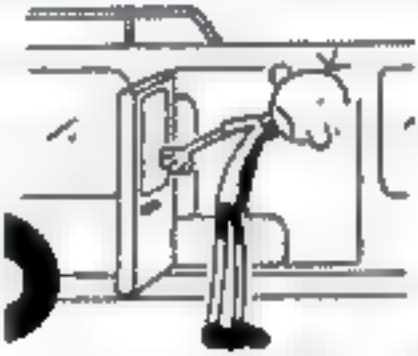


I tried to go back to sleep after Manny left the room, but Dad said I had to get up and start getting ready for church. I ran into Rodrick in the hallway, and he was even grumpier than I was. Apparently Manny had tried his pillow first.

Easter Mass at our church is a three-hour deal, and I didn't see how I was going to stay awake for the whole thing after getting only a few hours of sleep.

After breakfast, we piled in the station wagon and headed to church. My Big Gulp was still in the car, and it had some soda left in it. I figured I could use all the caffeine I could get, so I drank it, even though it was warm and gross.

But when we got out of the car, I could feel that something was wrong. I looked down at my pants, and there was a HUGE soda stain on them. I guess the bottom of the cup got so soggy that the straw poked a hole in the bottom and the soda leaked right out.



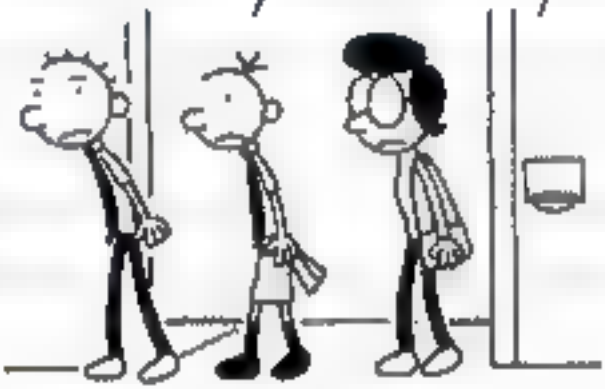
I got Mom's attention and showed her the stain. She didn't think it was a big deal, but I told her there was no WAY I was going into church with a stain like that. Mom said that me skipping Easter Mass was not an option.

That's when Rodrick piped in with his own solution.

I guess Rodrick was pretty desperate to get out of sitting through a three-hour ceremony.

Right at that moment, Mr. Swann and his three boys pulled up alongside us. It was definitely not our proudest moment as a family.

To make a long story short, Mom made Rodrick put his pants back on, and she gave me her sweater to tie around my waist. Luckily, we sat in the back.



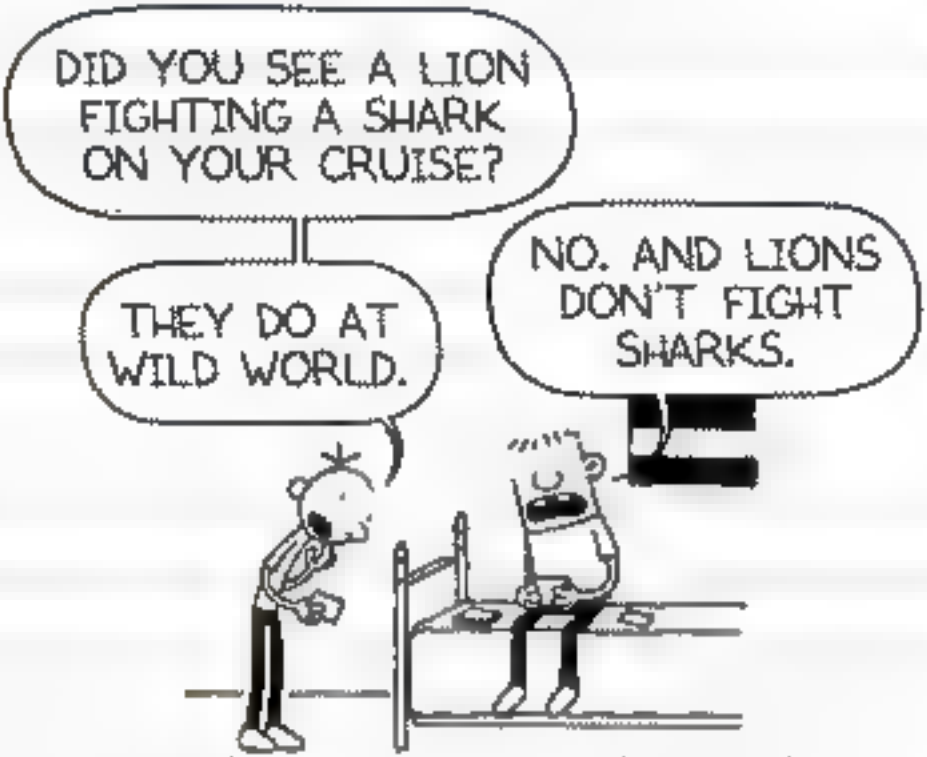
Monday, March 28th

Rowley got back from his big trip today, and just like I predicted, it's all he wanted to talk about.

I tried to give him hints that I wasn't really that interested, but he kept finding an excuse to work it into conversation anyway.

Rowley said the highlight of his trip was when he went on a jungle river cruise, and he showed me a bunch of blurry pictures of animals from that.

I've been on the River Rampage ride at Wild World, where they have all these awesome robot animals. And if you ask me, Rowley's folks should have just saved their money and taken him there instead.



If all Rowley's going to do is talk about his dumb trip, I don't know if it's worth me going up to his house anymore.

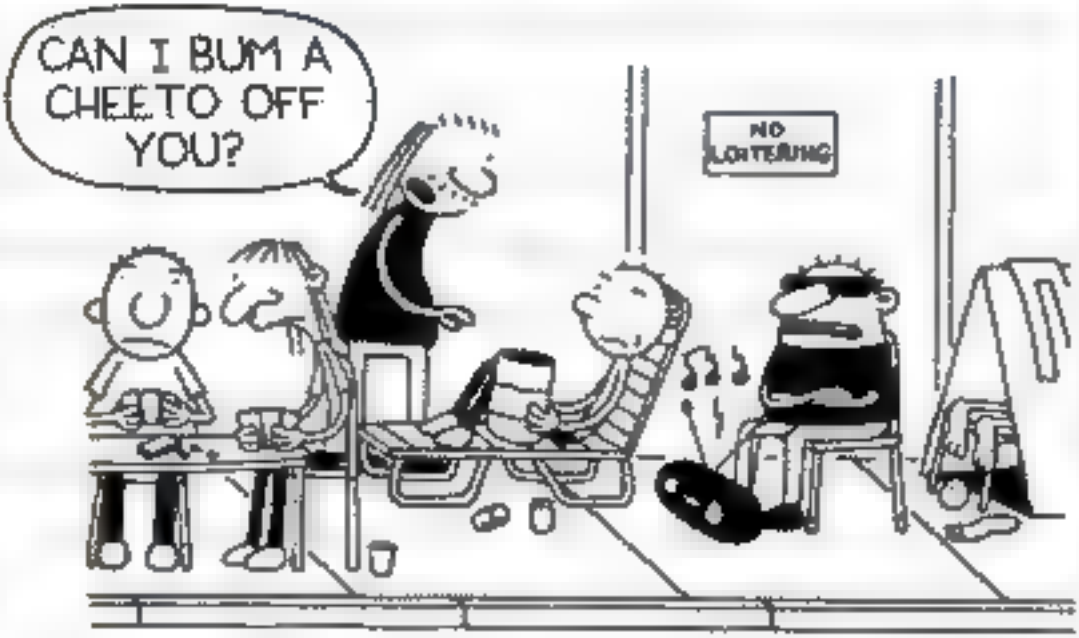
Plus, there's another reason going up to Rowley's is a real hassle.

Ever since Spring Break started, Fregly has been out in his front yard almost every day. And I'm done with crawling through the sewer to try and avoid him.

Tuesday, March 29th

I was thinking about the big video game tournament coming up, and all of the sudden it hit me. What if I don't get IN the tournament? The poster said that only the first 200 people who register get to play, and there's no guarantee I'll be one of them.

Whenever Rodrick has a big concert he wants to see, he camps out for tickets the night before they go on sale. In fact, that's how he met Bill.



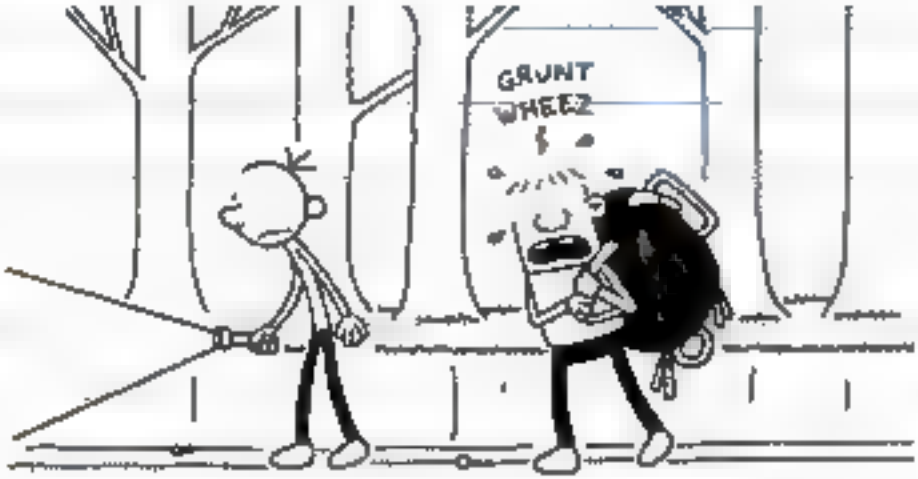
So I've got to make sure I'm one of the first 200 people in line on Thursday. I decided that I'm going to camp out in front of Electronics Hut for tickets tomorrow night. But I've got to get my hands on a tent, and that's where Rowley comes in.

Rowley's got a tent in his shed, and if I can convince him to let me borrow it, I'll be all set. So today, I was really buttering him up. I even swallowed my pride and pretended to be interested in his trip.

Wednesday, March 30th

I got Rowley to let me borrow his tent to camp out for the video game tournament. But when I packed up all the stuff I needed to bring, I realized I had too much to carry all by myself.

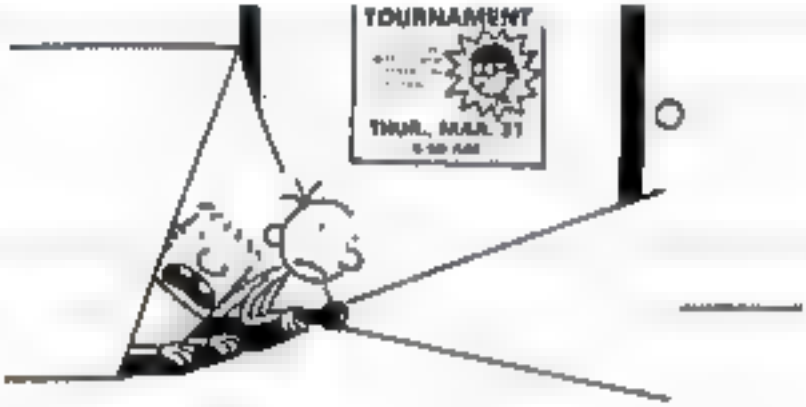
So I decided to invite Rowley to camp out with me and enter the tournament. But on the way down to Electronics Hut, I made it real clear to Rowley that he was going to be behind me in line. It would be just my luck for him to be the 200th person, and for me to be number 201.



Mom and Dad would never have let me camp out at the strip mall overnight. So I told them I was going to spend the night at Rowley's house, and I had Rowley tell his folks that he was sleeping over at mine.

Rowley was really dragging his feet on our walk to the strip mall, so I had to really keep on him.

But when we got to the store, we were the first ones there. I couldn't believe our luck. We pitched our tent and waited for the other people to start showing up.



It got pretty late, and the crowds still hadn't showed up. I decided me and Rowley should start sleeping in shifts, with one person staying awake to guard our place in line. I took the first sleeping shift, but I woke up at about 2:00 in the morning to the sound of Rowley snoring. I shook him awake and yelled at him for neglecting his duty and not being dedicated enough, but he didn't even have anything good to say in his defense.

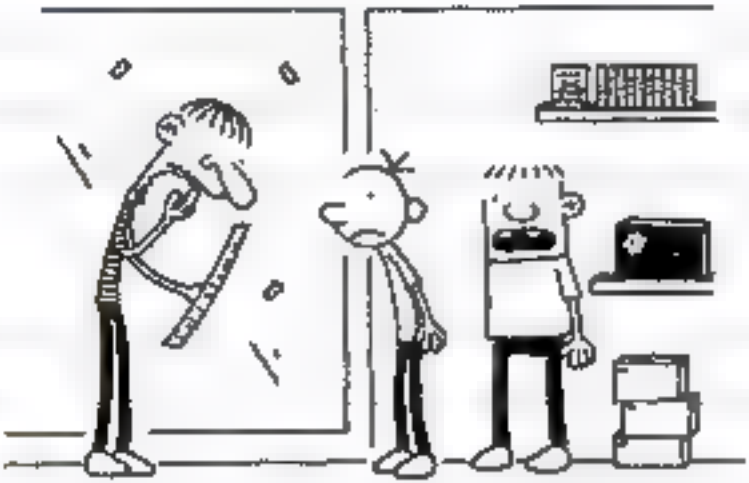
I guess it's up to me to stay up all night to make sure we keep our spot. So as usual, I'm the one who has to carry this team.

Thursday, March 31st

This morning, I heard some noise outside our tent, and it put me in a panic. I must have fallen asleep sometime in the middle of the night, and I thought someone took my place in the front of the line. But it was only the Electronics Hut clerk opening the store for the day.

Believe it or not, no one else had showed up and camped out for the tournament. So all that worrying about being one of the first 200 people to sign up turned out to be a little silly. But I still wasn't taking any chances.

I told the clerk me and Rowley were there for the video game tournament, and the clerk seemed pretty confused. Somehow, he didn't know a thing about the tournament, and he had to read the poster on the front window to get up to speed.



The clerk said the store wasn't really set up for a video game tournament, but since there were only two of us, maybe we could just play each other in the back room. I was a little irritated at first, but then I realized all I needed to do to win the whole tournament was beat Rowley once, and the prize money was mine.

We were supposed to play Twisted Wizard Black, and I'm practically an expert at that game. But the clerk said that he didn't have a copy of Twisted Wizard Black, so he set us up with a game called Kadizmo instead.

We had to play on this old black and white television. The whole point of Kadizmo is that you're supposed to gobble up the purple blobs and avoid the red ones, but with that t.v., you couldn't tell which was which. So when we started playing, Rowley was beating me on blind luck.

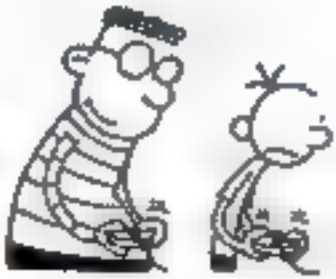
In fact, I think Rowley would have won the whole contest if I hadn't started playing smart.

Once I got my act together, beating Rowley was a snap. And when the game was winding down, I could practically taste the $50 prize money. But more importantly, I knew winning this dinky tournament was my first step in getting famous and getting out of having to go to Spag Union Military Academy.

But right when I was ready to claim my check, there was a knock at the door. And who should walk in the room but Leland, Rowley's babysitter.

Leland said he was there for the tournament, and my heart sank. Leland owns every video game that was ever made, and his fingers are permanently bent in the shape of a game controller. In fact, if I could have picked any one person that I didn't want to walk through that door, it would have been Leland.

The store clerk said the tournament finale would be me versus Leland. It took Leland about three minutes to mop up the floor with me.



When we were done, Leland had a $50 check in his pocket, and I had a $3-Off gift certificate to Twisted Wizard Black, a game I already have.

So I was pretty miserable walking out of the store. At least Rowley was happy. He had found a crumpled-up box of Cracker Jacks in the trash can of the staff room, and the prize was still in it.

Friday, April 1st

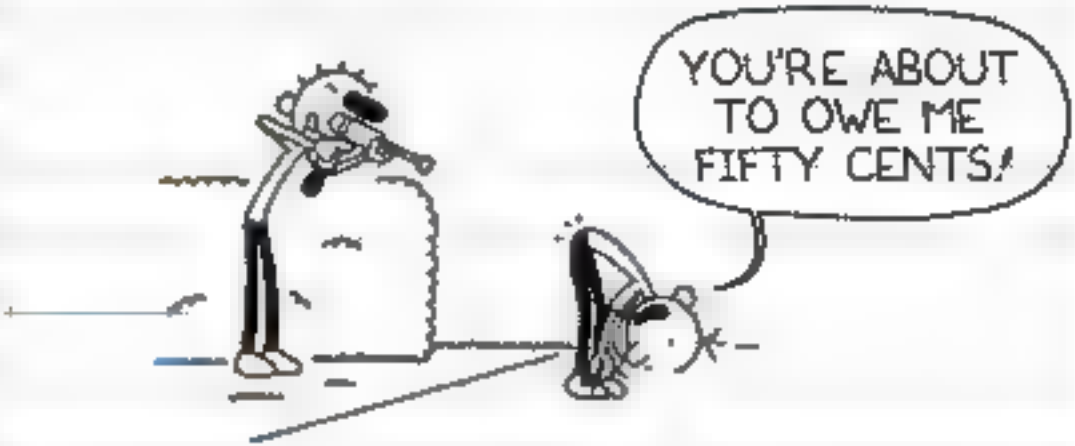
You know how on April Fool's Day, you're supposed to think up a funny practical joke to pull on someone? Well, please explain that to Rodrick, because he doesn't seem to get the concept.

Rodrick's April Fool's "jokes" almost always end up with me getting injured.

I should probably be glad I escaped with some sore ribs this year, because last year, it was a lot worse.

Last year, Rodrick bet me 50 cents I couldn't tie my shoes standing up. I wasn't thinking it was April 1st, and like a fool, I took the bait.

And with my back to Rodrick, I didn't notice him pulling his paintball gun out of the bushes.



He shot me right in the butt, and it stung like crazy.

I ran inside to tell Mom what Rodrick did, but she wasn't home. So I had to tell Dad instead.

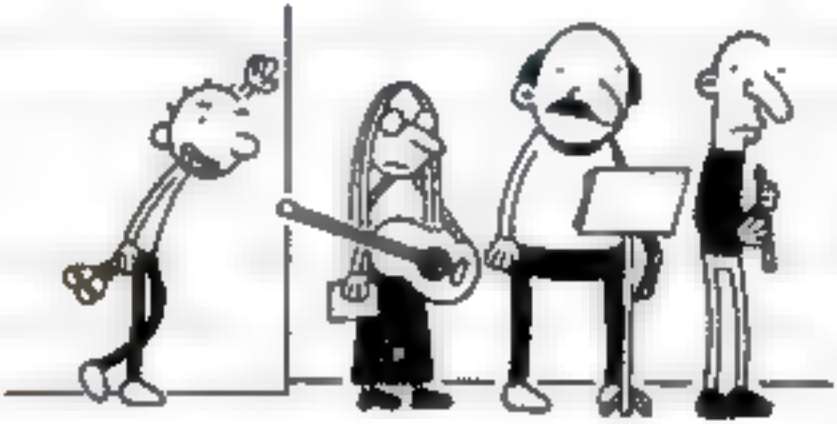
Unfortunately, Dad's not used to being the one who hands out the justice in our family. So the best he could come up with was that Rodrick had to pay me the 50 cents for winning the bet.

Rodrick dug two quarters out of his pocket and threw them on the ground. And I obviously didn't learn my lesson, because Rodrick nailed me again when I bent over to pick them up.

Saturday, April 2nd

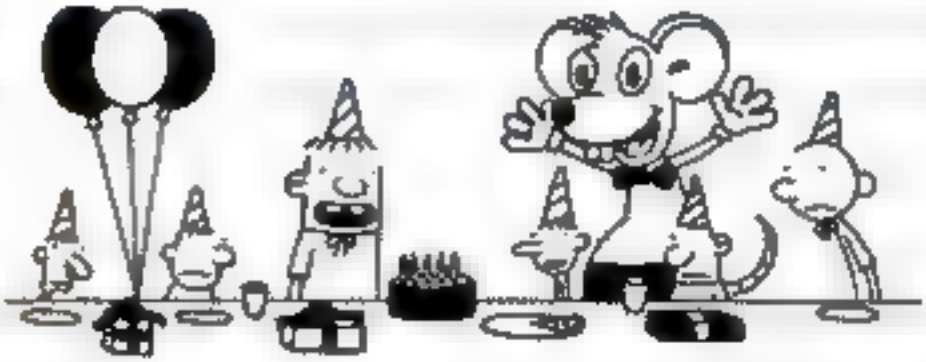
Mom talked Rodrick into joining the Folk Group at church, and tonight was his debut.

The only reason Rodrick agreed to join the Folk Group is because Mom said she heard they were looking for a "percussionist." Rodrick thought that meant he could play his drums in church instead of doing all that kneeling and standing like the rest of us. But it turns out that "percussionist" just meant "morocca player." Tonight, Rodrick tried to look as cool as possible in between songs, but it wasn't really working.



It stinks that we went to church tonight instead of tomorrow, because now, I don't have an excuse to get out of going to Rowley's birthday party.

Rowley's birthday parties are all the same. First of all, he always has them at one of those kids' places at the mall. And second, he invites every one of his cousins, who are all five years old or younger.

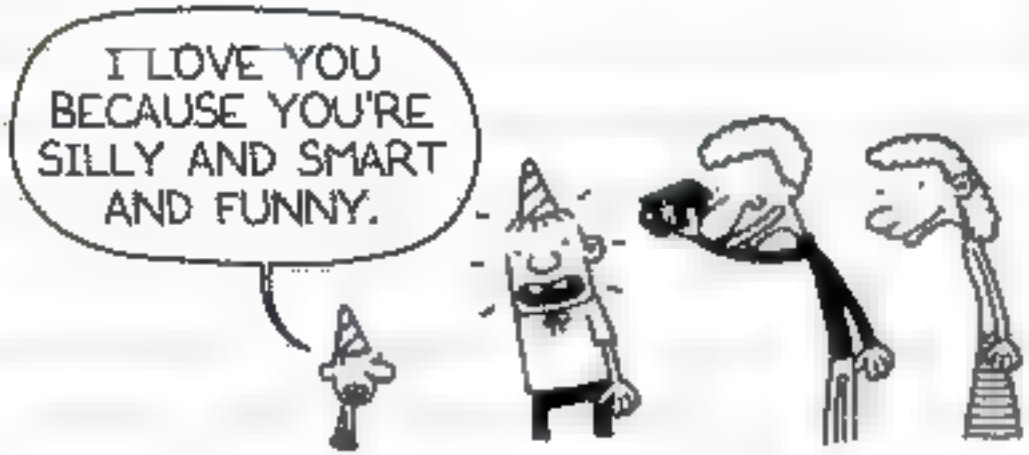


Rowley's parents always videotape his parties, and I have to hide my face the whole time so no one will ever know I was a participant at one of these stupid things.

Last year's party was the worst. Rowley's parents had everyone playing Pin the Tail on the Donkey and all the regular birthday games, but they also made up a new game called "I Love You Because."

I guess the point of the game was to try and make Rowley feel special on his birthday.

Every one of Rowley's cousins took a turn in front of the camera and told Rowley why he was great.



Some of Rowley's cousins couldn't even come up with a reason that made any sense.

I WUV YOU BECAUSE YOU THOWED THE BALL AND I CATCHED THE BALL.

But the worst part was when Rowley's parents made ME go in front of the camera. You know, if Rowley's family wants to be all touchy-feely when they're together, that's fine with me. But we Heffleys aren't really cut out for that sort of nonsense.

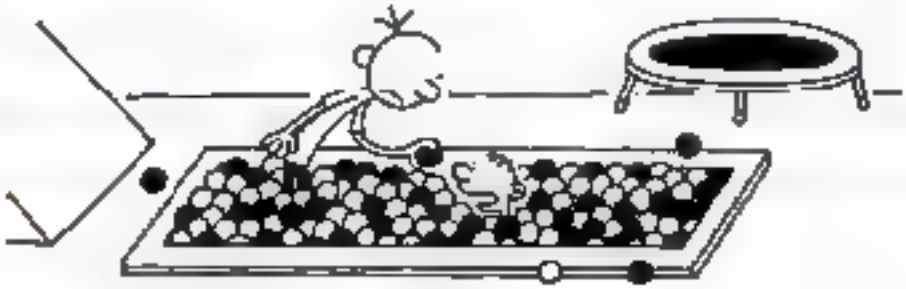
I LOVE YOU BECAUSE... UM... MAY I PLEASE BE EXCUSED?

Sunday, April 3rd

Rowley's birthday party was today, and it was pretty much like I expected. He had it at this place called Gymboree, and all his little cousins showed up.

The Gymboree people made us play all these games, and one of them was hide and seek. All of Rowley's cousins hid, and me and Rowley were supposed to find them.

I headed for the ball pit. My plan was to hide in there myself and wait until the party was over to come out. But when I climbed in, I uncovered a kid who was already in there.



The weird thing was, the kid wasn't one of Rowley's cousins. In fact, he wasn't even from Rowley's party at all. It turned out this kid was left over from the party BEFORE Rowley's. When that group played hide and seek, this kid hid in the ball pit, and nobody found him. So he had been in there for an hour, at least.

So Rowley's party had to be put on hold while the Gymboree people tried to track down this kid's parents.

After that situation got cleared up, we sat down at a table to have cake and watch Rowley open his gifts. Rowley asked for the entire DinoBlasters action figure set for his birthday, and from the looks of it, he got his wish.

After Rowley was done opening his toys, Rowley's mom handed him another gift that she said was from her and Rowley's dad. Rowley opened it up, and it was a diary. When I saw it, I got pretty mad. Rowley has been copying everything I do lately, and I knew he asked his parents for a diary so he could be just like me.

Lately, Rowley has been wearing the same kind of clothes I wear, eating the same kind of food I eat, you name it. Mom says I should be "flattered" that Rowley looks up to me, but I think it's creepy. Right before Spring Break, I did an experiment to see how far Rowley would go. On Thursday, I rolled up one of my pant legs and wore a bandana around my ankle. And sure enough, on Friday, Rowley did the same thing. My little experiment ended up getting us both called down to the principal's office that afternoon.

So this diary thing is just Rowley's next step in trying to become a carbon copy of me.

One thing I will say: I was mad at Mom before for getting me a journal that looked too girly. But after I saw Rowley's diary, I'm not so mad anymore.

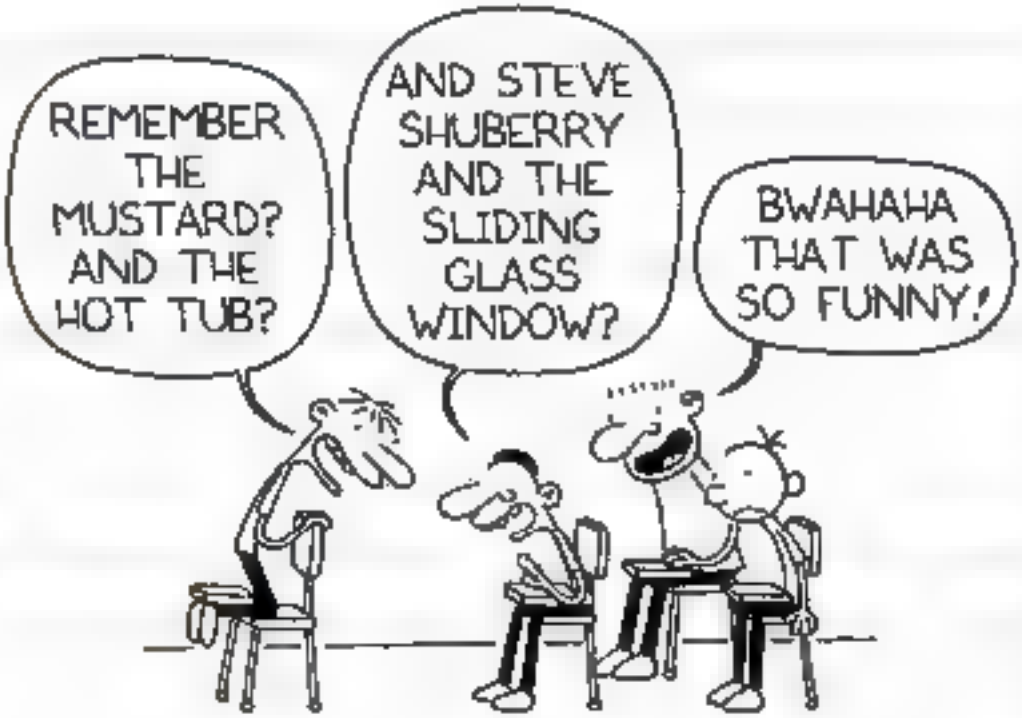
Rowley's diary even has one of those little locks, with a key to open it.

After Rowley opened his diary, he walked over to me and said:

I let him know what I thought about that idea by slugging him in the arm. And I really don't care if his dad caught it on tape.

Monday, April 4th

Well, Spring Break is over, and today was our first day back at school. All everyone wanted to talk about was Kristina Erickson's big party and how great it was, which really stunk for a person like me who didn't get to go.



So I was in a pretty crabby mood all day long. But I got crabbier in the 4th period.

The Social Studies teacher had Rowley tell the class about his trip to South America. So I had to listen to Rowley blab about his vacation for the millionth time.

And what really irked me was when Andrea Trotter and a couple of her friends came up to Rowley at lunch and acted like he was some kind of celebrity.

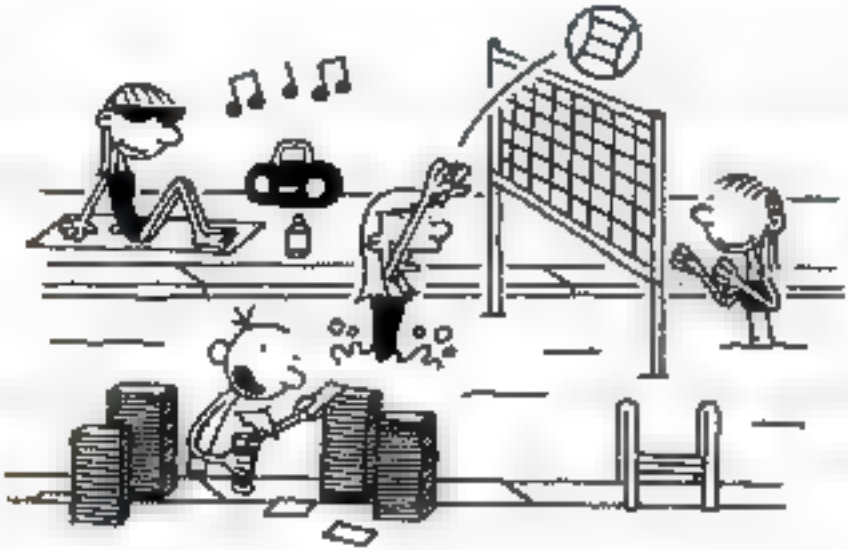
So my first day back to school wasn't so great. and I'm not looking forward to tomorrow, either. Tomorrow is Career Day, where they bring in all these adults to tell us about their jobs.

I think the idea is that us kids will find out about a job we like and then we'll know what we want to be when we grow up. But to be honest with you, most of the time, what really happens is that we find out which jobs to rule out.

Tuesday, April 5th

Today was Career Day at school, and we spent most of the day filling out these "Job-O" forms that I guess were supposed to make us think about our future and all that.

The first question on the form was, "Where do you see yourself in 15 years?" I'll tell you exactly where I'll be 15 years from now. I'll be in my pool, at my mansion, counting my money. But the Job-O didn't have a check box for that option.



There were about a million more questions on the Job-O, and at the end of it all, it tells you what kind of job you'll probably end up with when you grow up. When I finished, I looked up my job on the chart, and I got "Paralegal." I don't know what that is, but the salary wasn't so hot. So I erased all my answers and started over. On my second try, I wanted to make sure I got the highest paying job so I could rub it in everyone's noses.

I did a lot better the second time around, and I got "CEO." It was actually pretty easy to avoid getting stuck with a rinky-dink job if you just paid attention to the questions.

43 Do you object to repetitive tasks and menial labor?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

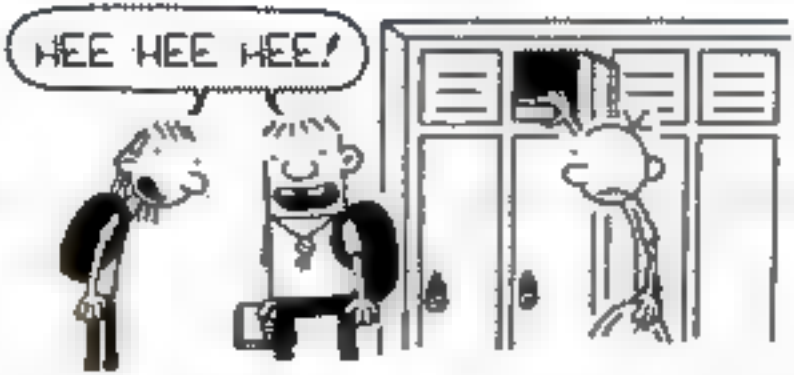
44 Respond to this statement: "Higher education is a waste of time."

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree

Some of the kids in my class were pretty upset with the jobs they ended up with. Mrs. Battle, the teacher, said we shouldn't take these Job-O things too seriously.

But if Mrs. Battle thought the Job-O's were a bunch of hooey, she didn't act like it. Charlie Welsh got "Sanitation Worker" on his Job-O, and Mrs. Battle started treating him pretty differently.

Rowley got "Flight Attendant," and he seemed pretty happy about it. Andrea Trotter got Flight Attendant, too, so now her and Rowley have something else to gab about. Rowley walked home with Andrea and her friends yesterday, and he even sat at their lunch table today. I'll bet Rowley's getting all kinds of good gossip from Andrea and her friends and writing it down in his stupid diary. He leaves that thing laying around all the time, but I can't read it, because it's locked and he keeps the key around his neck. I'll bet they're talking about me, but I have no way of finding out for sure.



Wednesday, April 6th

Rowley sat with Andrea Trotter and her friends at lunch again today. The whole group of them spent the hour whispering and giggling like a bunch of fourth graders.

Every once in a while, one of them would look over my way while they were talking. I couldn't figure out what was so funny, and I kept wiping my face to make sure I didn't have a french fry on my chin or something. I tried to think what could be so amusing, and finally, I think I figured it out.

The only thing Rowley could say about me that would make people laugh like that is something that happened to me in the fifth grade.

We had a project where we had to do a skit using only Spanish sentences, and me and Rowley were partners. The plan was to have Rowley say, "What would you do for an ice cream cone?" And then I would say, "I'd stand on my head for an ice cream cone." It was supposed to be funny, but it ended up being funny for the wrong reason. Because when I tried to stand on my head, I tipped over and fell into the wall.

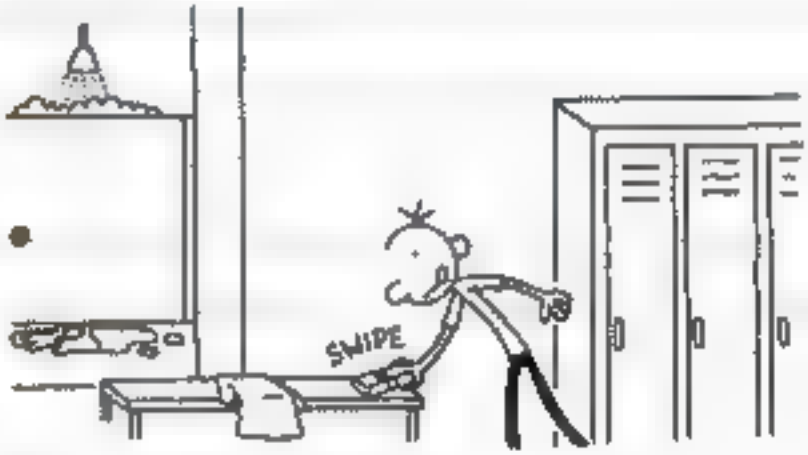
When I fell, my butt went right through the drywall. It took three people to pull me out. And everyone had a good laugh over it but me.

The thing that really stunk was that they never repaired the hole, so everyone in my school found out the story behind it. I had to deal with two years of people talking about the Heffley Hole.

I thought once I moved up to middle school I could leave that story behind me. But here was Rowley, digging up the past.

Rowley spent recess writing in his diary again. I knew he was writing down what happened at the lunch table, and I wanted to know every last word that was said.

So I decided it was time for drastic measures. After Phys Ed, Rowley took a shower, and he left his diary on the bench. His key was still around his neck, but I took the diary anyway. I figured I could pick the lock later on.



I've spent my whole night trying to open this stupid diary, but I can't get the lock to budge. And I've got to get it back to Rowley before he notices it's missing.

Thursday, April 7th

After dinner, Dad dropped me off at St. Peter's for my first night of CCD. CCD is like church school at night, and Mom signs me up every April.

Tonight's topic was "Jesus in Disguise," and the idea was that you never know if a person you meet is actually really Jesus. I guess the point of the lesson was to be nice to strangers, but it just made me paranoid. With my luck, I'm going to guess wrong and suck up to the wrong person.

At CCD, they gave us a list of books we had to buy for the class, so afterwards, Dad took me to the bookstore. Something caught my eye in the Journals section. They had a whole rack of those "Sweet Secrets" diaries, just like the one I took from Rowley. I realized the keys on those books are all EXACTLY the same, and I knew right then how to open Rowley's diary. So I slipped one of the Sweet Secrets books into the pile of CCD books Dad was paying for at the register.

When I got home, I ran up to my room to try out the key I got off the new diary. Sure enough, when I turned the key in the lock in Rowley's diary, I heard a click, and the book opened.

I flipped right to the last entry to find out what Rowley and his dumb friends were saying about me yesterday.

Dear Diary,
Today I played with my Dinoblaster action figures again. It was Mechaneck vs. Triceraclops and Mechaneck bited Triceraclops in the tail.

And then Triceraclops turned around and said oh yeah well how do you like <u>that</u> and he shot Mechanek right in the hainie.

I scanned through the rest of the diary looking for any kind of mention of my name, but it was just page after page of this garbage.

I guess I felt a little relieved my Spanish class story wasn't anywhere in the diary. But part of me is starting to wonder if maybe Rowley has a screw loose.

Friday, April 8th

When I got home from school today, there was a note from Mom and Dad that said they were off on a "romantic weekend" and that they'd be back Sunday. The note also said that Grandpa was going to come over to "babysit" this weekend. I guess Mom and Dad still don't trust us after that party.

Grandpa showed up around 6:00, but he wasn't alone. He brought his "lady friend" Maurlene with him. I'm just glad Rodrick opened the door, and not me.

I think Rodrick could see where this weekend was headed, because he was out of here as soon as he could find his car keys.

I don't think Manny was too happy about getting stuck with Grandpa and Maurlene for the weekend, either, but he couldn't escape like Rodrick. So he just completely shut it down and acted like he couldn't speak.

I wish I had thought of that first.

With Rodrick and Manny out of the picture, I had to do all the socializing with Grandpa and Maurlene.

Grandpa said Mom left instructions that my bedtime was 10:00, but he would let me stay up until 10:30.

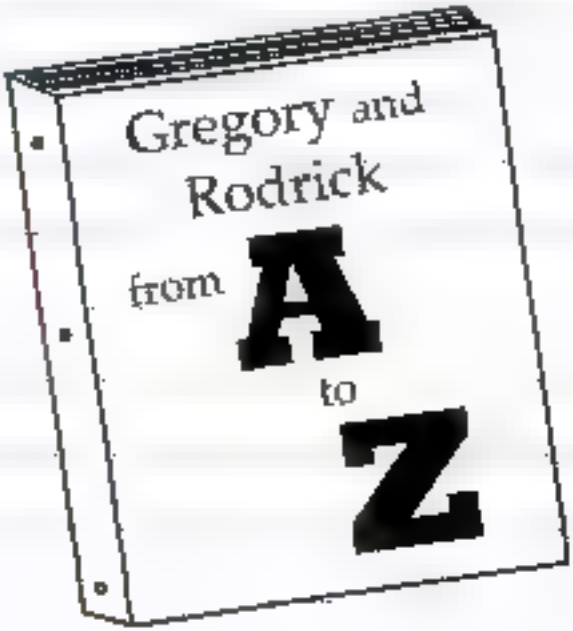
It's only 7:30 now, but I'm turning in for the night. Hopefully I can sleep through until Sunday.

Saturday, April 9th

I think Grandpa and Maurlene got tired of Manny's mute act, because they dropped him off at Gramma's house first thing this morning. So I guess Manny escaped after all.

I really wasn't looking forward to spending a whole day with Grandpa and Maurlene, but to be honest, it wasn't that bad. They took me to a movie, and then they bought me TWO video games at the mall. Things were going great until they decided we should go to the Sears Picture Studio and have a "family portrait" taken. So I guess I'm going to end up on Grandpa and Maurlene's Christmas card.

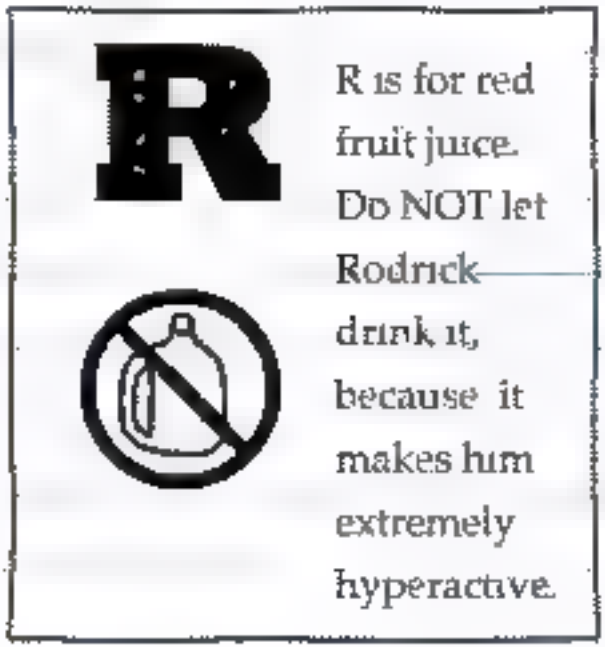
Back at home, Grandpa made pigs in a blanket for dinner. I haven't had pigs in a blanket since I was a little kid. Grandpa got the recipe from this white binder he's been carrying around with him all weekend. He left it out on the counter when he went to use the bathroom, and I checked it out.



It looked kind of familiar, but I didn't know what it was until I opened it up.

It was an instructions manual Mom wrote for Grandpa a long time ago when Mom and Dad went on a trip and Grandpa came to our house to babysit us. She wanted to make sure everything went smoothly while they were away.

I can't believe Grandpa is still using that same manual. The stuff in there is about eight years out of date.



Some of the stuff was pretty embarrassing to me. I'm just glad I found this manual before Rodrick did, or I would never hear the end of it.

S

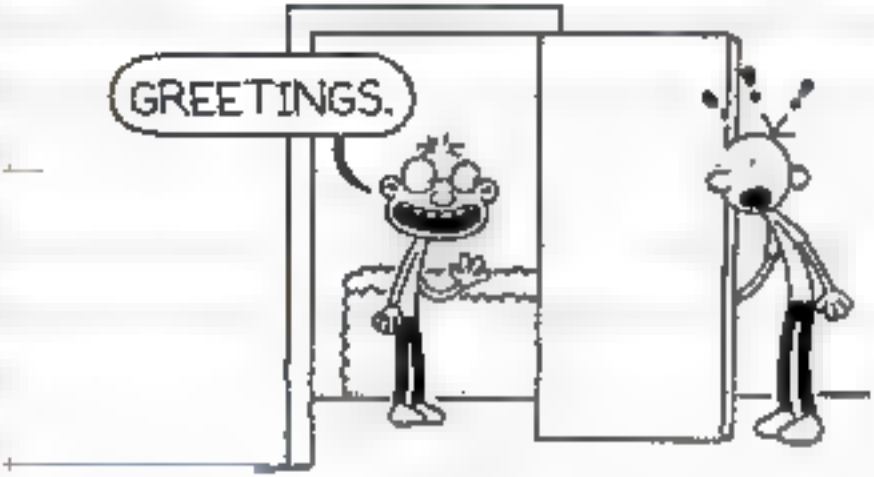
S is for
Sneakers
Gregory calls
his sneakers his
"Wild Boys."
He still needs
help putting
them on.

On the "T" page, it said I was only allowed to watch a half hour of television a day. So when Grandpa wasn't looking, I ripped out that page and replaced it with one of my own that said my t.v. time was unlimited.

I really hope Rodrick comes back home tonight. Because I swapped in a new "S" page just in case he does.

Sunday, April 10th

My Sunday started off great. I got to play my two new video games all morning, and with Rodrick and Manny out of the house, I had the t.v. all to myself. But everything changed at 11:30 a.m when I heard a knock at the door.



It was Fregly! Fregly never leaves his front yard, so seeing him right there in my doorway almost put me in shock. I slammed the door as quick as I could, but I had to do some deep breathing to calm myself down. I racked my brain to try to figure out what Fregly was doing showing up at my house.

It turns out it was all Maurlene's fault. Apparently she met Fregly while she was out on a walk this morning, and she told him he should drop by the house, because I needed a "play-mate."

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Maurlene told me she thought I was a "lonely boy," playing video games in my house all day. I told her one of the reasons I stay in my house all day is because I don't want to risk running into Fregly. But she didn't seem to get it.

It really spooked me, having Fregly loose in the neighborhood like that. After I slammed the door on him, he didn't go back to his house. He stayed in my yard, and every time I looked out the window, he was peeking out from behind a tree or a bush or something.

I've heard that a vampire can't get into your house unless you invite him in. I'll bet it's the same kind of deal with Fregly. Now that he's gone outside of his normal boundaries, I'll bet there's no way to contain him.

I had planned on going up to Rowley's today, but with Fregly prowling around my house, there was no chance I was going to step foot out the door.

Monday, April 11th

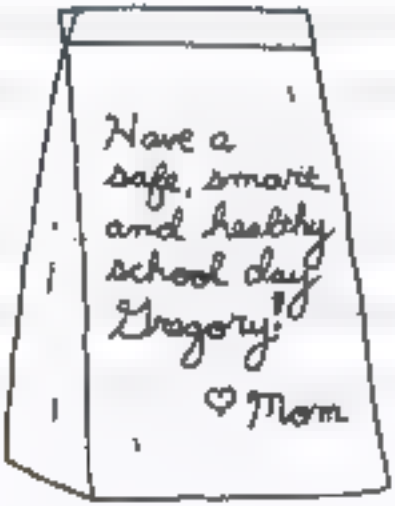
I thought Fregly was going to stay in my yard all night, but thankfully at 6:30, his mom called him home for dinner.

Grandpa and Maurlene left a few minutes before Mom and Dad got home, which is a good thing. Because if Mom knew Maurlene had been sleeping in her bed all weekend, I'm sure it wouldn't have been pretty.

Later on tonight, Mom called us all into the kitchen for one of her house meetings. She announced that she's going to start taking night classes at the university, and that she's starting this week.

Mom said she won't be home most nights, and that the four of us are going to have to chip in and take care of making our own lunches and dinners.

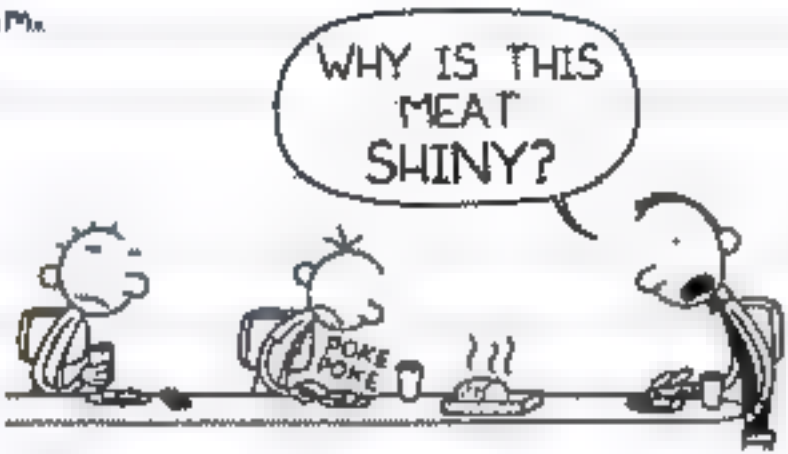
To be honest with you, I'm kind of relieved Mom won't be packing my lunches any more. Mom always writes a message on my lunch bag, and I have to remember to scratch it out before I get to the cafeteria.



But the thing I'm worried about is helping out with dinner, because I know it's going to fall on me.

Manny's too young to help out with dinner, and Dad doesn't trust Rodrick around his food.

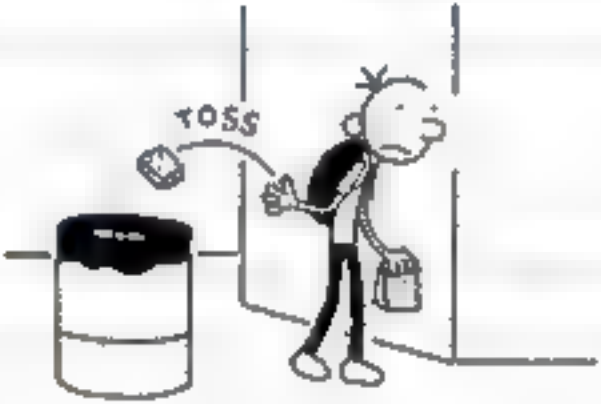
A couple months ago, Mom was going to be home late, so Dad called Rodrick and told him to put a roast in the oven. But Rodrick didn't take the plastic off the roast before he put it in the pan. So I'm sure Dad thought Rodrick was trying to kill him.



Tuesday, April 12th

Last night, Mom had a "seminar" in the kitchen where she taught me, Rodrick and Dad how to make bagged lunches. Then she handed us a schedule that said who had to make lunches on what night.

Rodrick got the first shift. So today, I didn't even bother to open my sandwich when I got to the cafeteria. Because Rodrick doesn't wash his hands after he uses the bathroom.



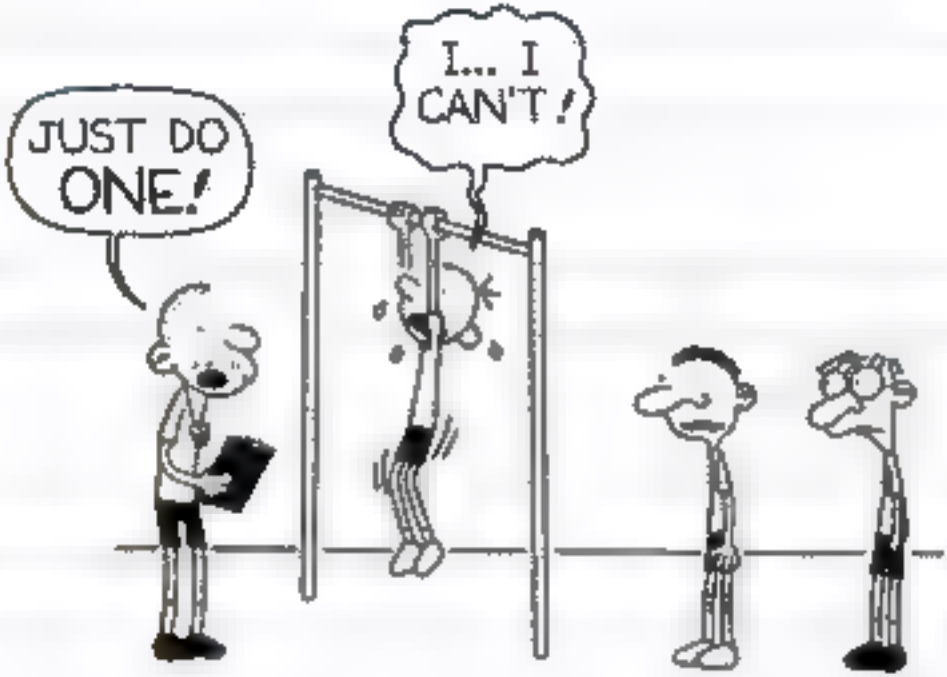
Remember how I said I hate it when Mom puts a note on my lunch bag? Well, Rodrick must have figured that out.

Because when I sat down to open my lunch, there was a note waiting for me.

I ate my Ho Ho first, and I was all set to eat my fruit. But when I emptied my bag, I found out the fruit Rodrick packed for me was a lemon.

I don't know if Rodrick was joking or if he thought a lemon was a legitimate lunch fruit.

It was a really bad day to go without eating anything healthy. Today was Presidential Fitness Day in gym, and halfway through, I was really wishing I had figured out some way to eat that lemon.



Wednesday, April 13th

Mom had class again tonight, so the rest of us had to take care of ourselves for dinner. Dad said we could just heat up leftovers from last night's dinner, but I had to remind him that I can't eat leftovers any more. And I can thank Rodrick for that.

I used to LOVE leftovers when I was a kid. But then one night, Mom left a note for Rodrick to heat up some spaghetti that was in the refrigerator. Rodrick pretended like he heated up my plate in the microwave, but he never actually turned it on.

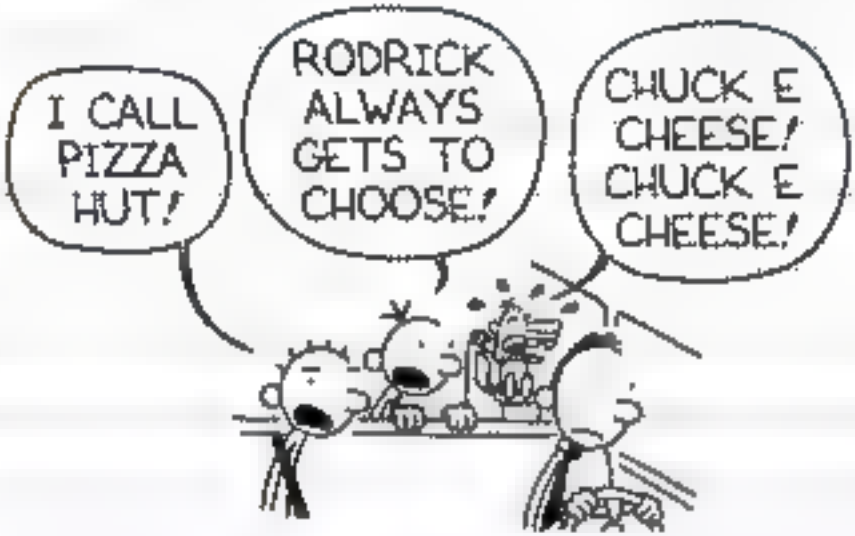
I don't know if you've ever bit into a cold meatball thinking it was going to be hot, but it's enough to make you not be able to eat meatballs for the rest of your life.

So leftovers were out. Dad decided we'd just make some hot dogs and iced tea instead. He had me boil some water for the hot dogs and he put Manny to work mixing the iced tea. But Dad lost his appetite watching Manny stir the iced tea with his bare hands, and so we just bagged it and went out to dinner instead.

Thursday, April 14th

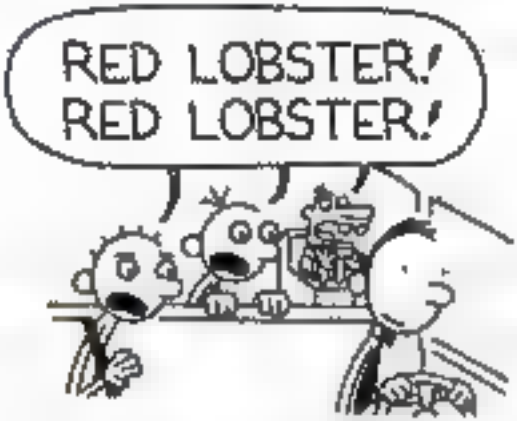
I guess Dad has already given up on having us make our own dinner, because we went out to eat again tonight.

Last night, Dad asked us boys where we wanted to eat, and it turned into ten minutes of bickering.



I guess Dad must have learned his lesson, because, tonight when we got in the car, Dad gave us three choices of where we could eat.

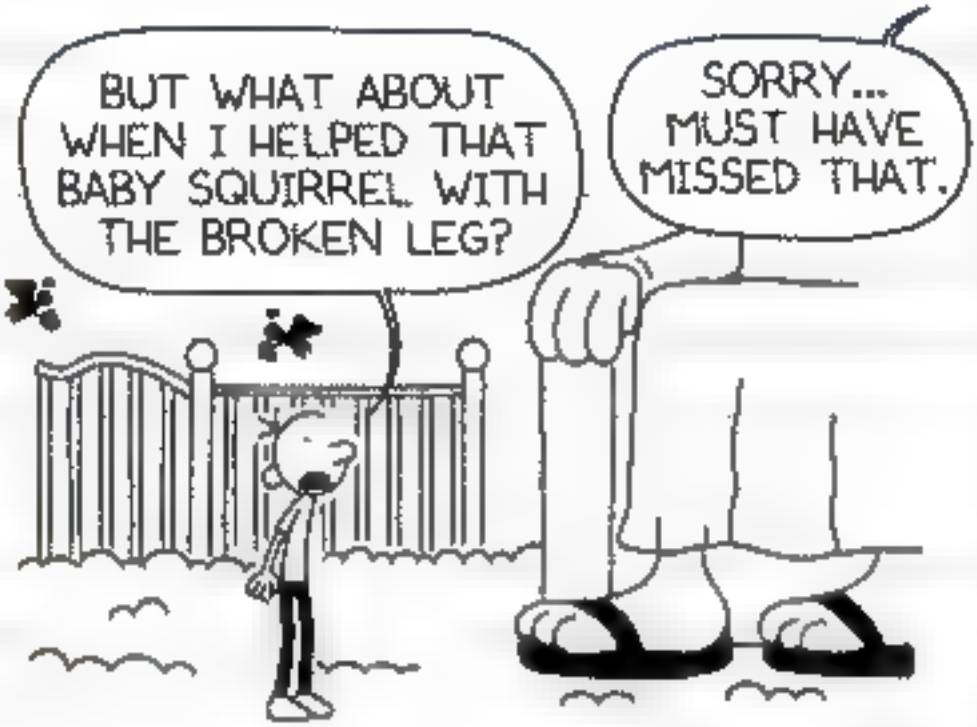
He said we had to choose between the Tofu Grille, the Vegetarian's Delight, or Red Lobster. It took about a half a second for us to decide.



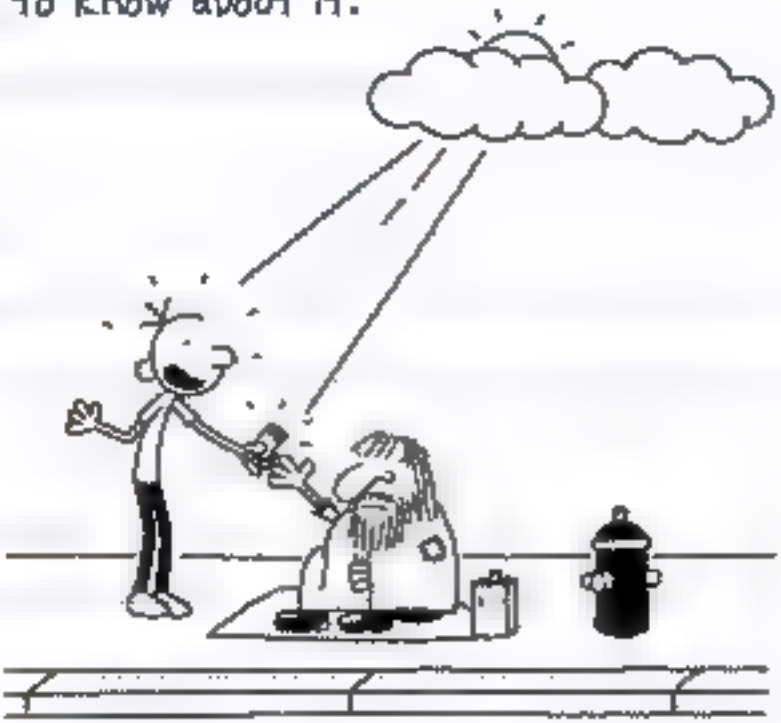
It wasn't until halfway through dinner that I realized Dad tricked us into picking his favorite restaurant.

It was pretty sneaky, but I got to give him credit for that one.

After dinner, Dad dropped me off at CCD. Tonight's class was all about how if you do a good deed, you should keep it secret, or it won't really count. But that sounds like a really bad idea to me. I don't do that many good deeds to begin with, and if I'm secret about the few good things I actually do, I have about a zero chance of getting into Heaven.



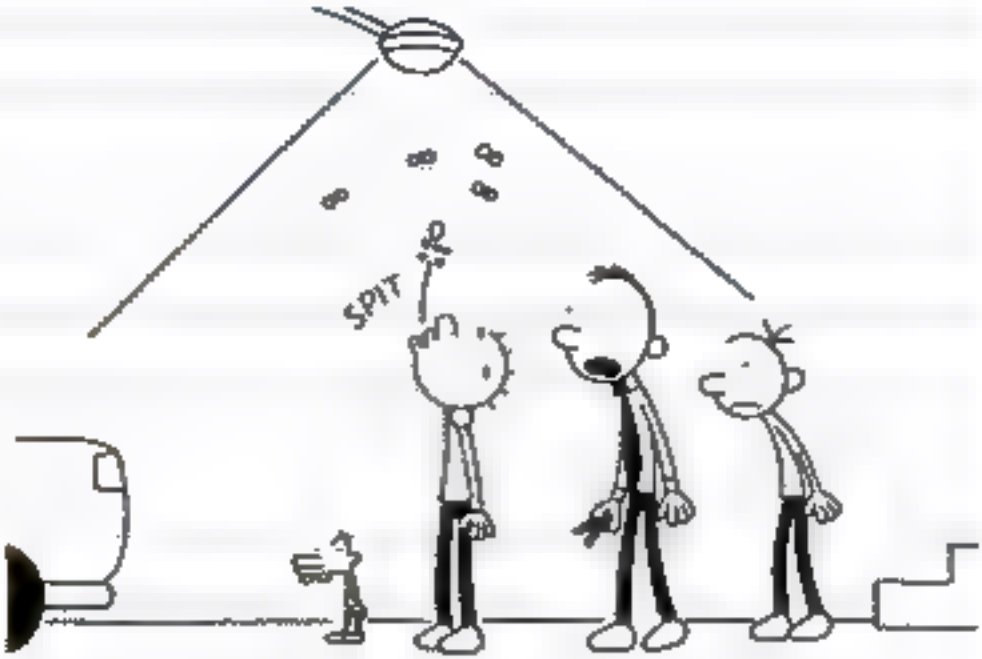
So believe me, when I do a good deed, God is going to know about it.



Friday, April 15th

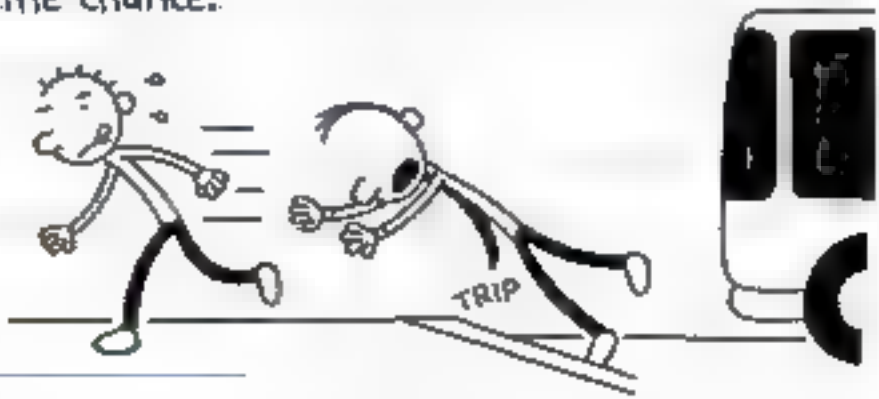
Tonight, we went out for dinner for the third night in a row. But I have a feeling it will be the last time for a while.

When we were walking out of the restaurant, Rodrick saw some bugs flying around the street light. So he stopped and tried to shoot a few of them down with his chewing gum.



But Dad was walking right behind him, and Dad got hit right on the head.

The next thing you knew, Dad was chasing Rodrick around the parking lot. I don't know what Dad would have done with Rodrick if he caught him, but Dad tripped over a curb before he got the chance.



Dad took a pretty bad spill, and when he tried to stand up, he couldn't walk on his ankle. So he had to ask Rodrick to drive us all to the emergency room. And when the doctor asked Dad how he hurt his ankle, he told her he slipped on a patch of oil in his driveway.

It's the first time I ever heard Dad tell a fib.

I don't really blame him. One time, I read an entire novel in the bathroom, and my legs fell asleep while I was on the toilet. So when I went to stand up, I fell on my face and chipped a tooth. And I wasn't exactly going around advertising the truth about how it happened.

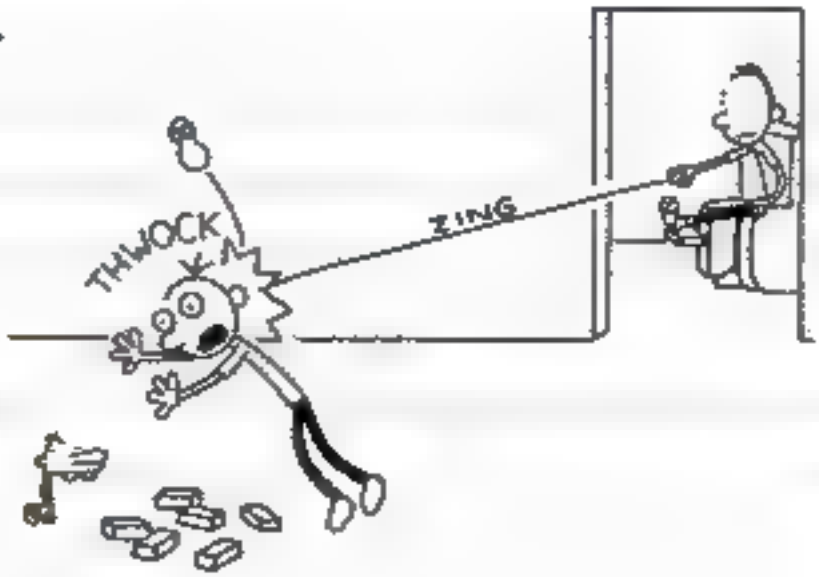
Saturday, April 16th

Dad's not allowed to walk on his right foot for a few days, which is bad news for me. Because whenever Dad needs something, I have to go and fetch it for him. This morning, I got the newspaper for Dad, and instead of just saying "thanks," here's what he said:

I don't know what made Dad say that, especially since I haven't picked on Manny in a long time. But once Dad put the thought in my head, there was no fighting it.

Since I'm not the one who came up with the idea to begin with, I don't really think I'm to blame for what happened next.

Unfortunately, Dad saw what I did from his seat in the living room. So he picked up Ellie, this old stuffed animal we have laying around, and chucked it at me.



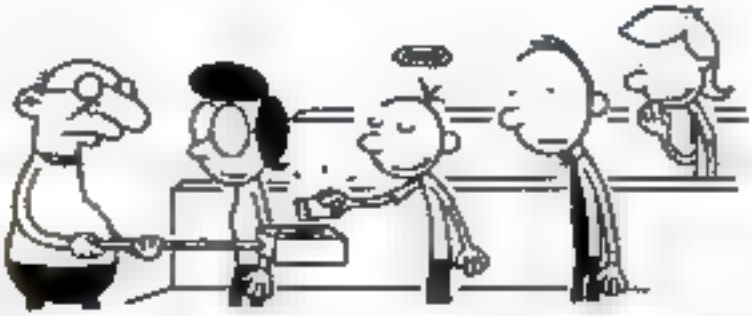
From Dad's chair to where I was standing must have been 50 feet. I was pretty surprised Dad connected from that distance, because I've seen him take a lot of bad shots in my life.

I was actually kind of relieved Dad zinged me, and that was the end of it. Because if he missed, it would have been pretty awkward.

Sunday, April 17th

I couldn't believe my luck at church today. We sat RIGHT in front of Piper Matthews and her family, and I knew it was my big chance to do something in front of Piper to impress her.

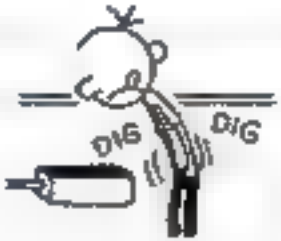
When the collection basket came around, I decided to act. Mom usually lets Manny put the money in the basket. But I figured today, I'd get the money from Mom and make a big show of putting it in the basket so Piper could see how generous I am.



So when the usher got to our row, I tried to get Mom to slip me the money. But she wouldn't fork it over.

Mom told me if I wanted to have a real appreciation of what it means to be "charitable," I should give my own money. And then she dropped her money in the basket herself.

Now the basket was right in front of me, so I went through my pockets to see if there was a one in a million chance I had a buck or two.



I couldn't believe it, but there WAS money in my pocket. It was a 20 dollar bill Grandpa had given me on his last visit.

At first, I thought, there's no WAY I'm dropping 20 bucks in that basket.

But I knew Piper was looking, so I had no choice.

I tried to make change to at least get some of my money back. But Mom put a stop to that by slapping my hand.

All I can say is, I hope God was watching today. I'd better get some serious credit for putting that 20 dollar bill in the basket, because believe me, that'll be my last good deed for a while.

Monday, April 18th

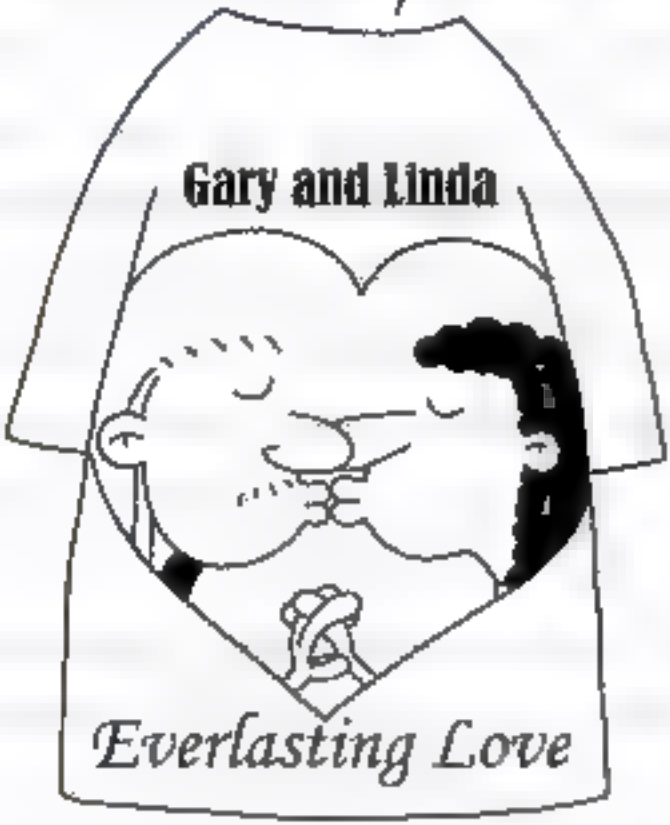
Mom had another one of her house meetings last night. I figured she had come to her senses and she was going to announce that quitting this night school nonsense. Ever since Mom went back to school, things have completely fallen apart around here. Everything's a mess, and none of us boys have eaten a fruit or vegetable in a week.

But the reason Mom called the meeting was that she wanted to let us know she was hiring a "domestic assistant" to help out around the house.

She said she can't keep up with the cleaning anymore, so she's hired a woman named Isabella to come help out two days a week.

Dad seemed pretty concerned about how much Isabella is going to cost us, but personally, I can't wait for her to show up.

I've been really slacking on my laundry lately, and the only clean shirt I've got in my dresser is a party favor from Uncle Gary's last wedding.



I'll be pretty happy to hand off my laundry duties to this Isabella person.

The main thing Mom stressed was that she didn't want anybody knowing we were hiring someone to help her out. I guess she's worried about people in the neighborhood judging her because she can't clean her own house. But at school today, it was a little hard keeping my mouth shut.

Tuesday, April 19th

Mom told us Isabella starts tomorrow, and as far as I'm concerned, she can't get here soon enough.

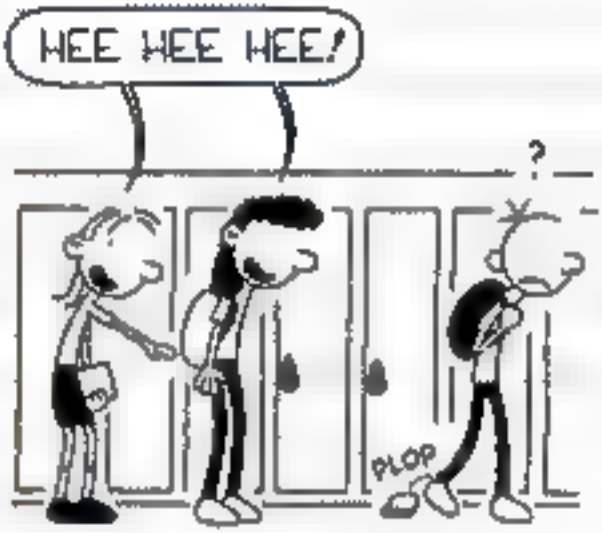
I've started dipping into my dirty laundry just so I have something to wear to school. I have two piles of laundry one my floor: one I can get away with wearing again, and one I can't. If a shirt has dirt or a big stain on it, it doesn't really bother me. What I go by is smell.

Sweetie won't even go near my "do not wear again" pile. And that's saying something, because Sweetie rolls around in his own poop in the back yard.

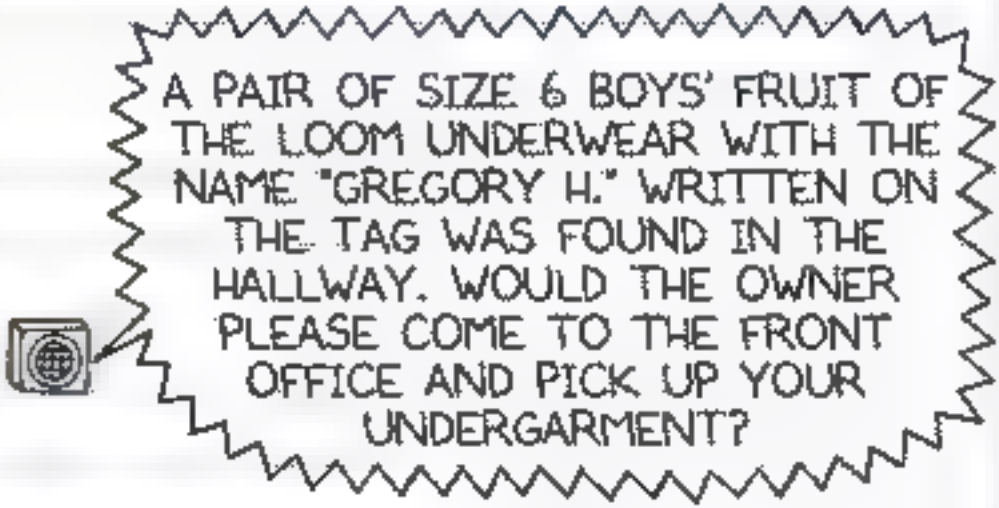
I found out today that recycling your clothes is a pretty risky thing to do.

I was walking by some of the cheerleaders' lockers, trying to look as cool as possible, and I was wearing the same pants I wore yesterday.

But it turns out that when I put my pants on today, I didn't notice that the underwear I wore yesterday was bunched up in one of the legs. And my dirty underwear popped out of the bottom of my pants at the worst possible moment.

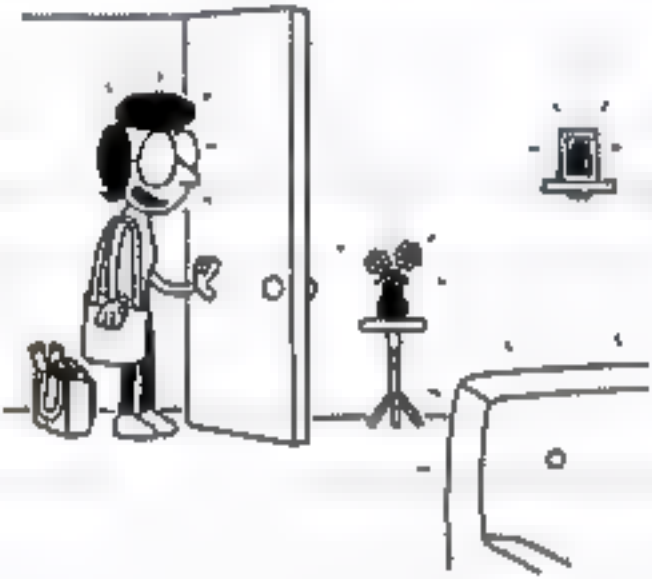


When I realized what happened, I just kept walking like nothing happened. I hoped that if I didn't make a big deal out of it, people wouldn't know for sure the underwear was mine. But I should have just turned around and picked them up right then and there.



Wednesday, April 20th

Today was Isabella's first day, and when Mom walked in the door tonight, she was really happy about how clean the house was.



The funny thing is, I doubt Isabella even had to lift a finger. Because last night, Mom cleaned the whole house from top to bottom.

Mom was embarrassed about how messy the house was, and she didn't want Isabella to think we lived in a pigsty.

So Mom was up until midnight cleaning every room.

Well, I guess if Mom is happy that the house is clean, that's all that really matters.

I'm not so sure about this Isabella myself. I left her a note to try to get her to do my laundry, and let's just say she didn't come through for me. I knew Mom wouldn't let me tell Isabella to do my dirty clothes, so I left a note that looked like it came from Mom.

Here's the note I left for Isabella:

> Dear Isabella,
>
> Would you please do all of the laundry in the bag in my son Gregory's room?
>
> Sincerely, Mrs. Heffley

And here's the note I found when I got home:

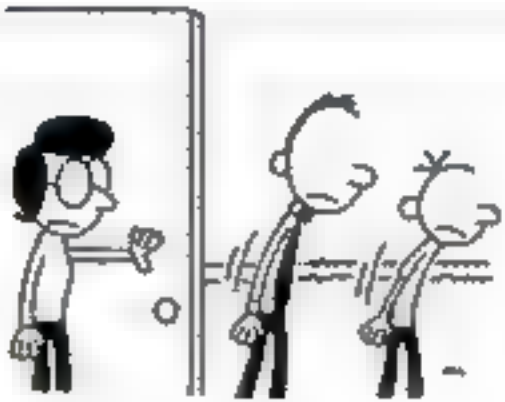
> Dear Mrs Heffley -
>
> The bag in Gregory's room exceeds the 15-pound lifting limit we had previously agreed upon.
>
> Isabella

If it turns out we hired a maid who's actually lazier than me, we could have a real problem.

Thursday, April 21st

Tonight, Mom was going through my CCD stuff, and she found out I haven't been doing the assignments they hand out every week. She was pretty mad at me, but she was mad at Dad, too, because he's in charge of making sure I do everything I'm supposed to do for CCD.

Our homework for tonight was to "help a person in need" and write about the experience. So after dinner, Mom sent me and Dad out of the house and told us she expected the assignment to be finished before CCD started at 7:30.

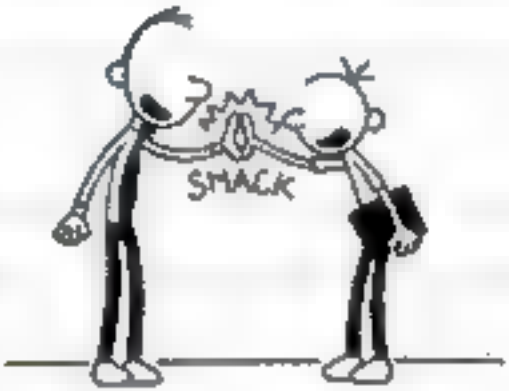


Me and Dad went off looking for some person to help out. Dad came up with the idea of driving around the Assisted Living center parking lot, because we were bound to find some old lady who needed help carrying a bag up to her apartment or something.

It took a while, but we finally found somebody who needed a hand. Dad spotted a lady walking along the side of the road, and he pulled over and asked her where she was going. She said she was going to the grocery store, so we offered her a ride.

When the woman got in the car, she told us she needed to get to the Star Market. First of all, the Star Market is about seven miles away, and it was in the opposite direction of where she was heading. So we were helping someone who needed a ride AND was lost, which in my mind should count for extra credit.

We dropped the woman off at the Star Market, and then turned around and headed for the church. I wrote it all down in my CCD notebook on the car ride over there, and we pulled up at the church at 7:30 on the dot.



I actually felt pretty good about helping that woman out, and I thought to myself, I could get used to this Good Samaritan thing.

On the way home from CCD, me and Dad got some mint chocolate chip ice cream to celebrate our good deed. Mom asked us how we did, and Dad told her all about the old lady who needed the ride and how we saved her about two hours of walking.

But Mom told us there's a new Star Market a block away from the Assisted Living center, and that's probably where the woman was heading to begin with.

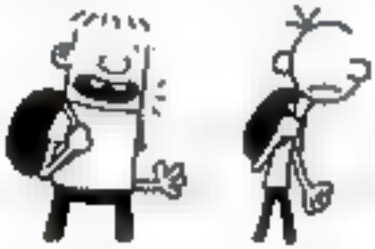
That kind of took the fun out of our ice cream party.

Me and Dad tracked down the old lady 15 minutes later, walking along the side of the road, about two miles short of the Assisted Living center.

I've learned my lesson about trying to be nice to strangers, because that woman didn't even say "thanks" when we dropped her off at her front door.

Friday, April 22nd

On the way home from school today, Rowley was going on and on about this sleepover he's going to tomorrow night. One of his friends from karate is having his whole class over for a big slumber party. I was kind of half listening to Rowley, but then he said something that caught my attention.



Rowley said his friend lives in River Run, which is where Piper Matthews lives. And here's the thing: Piper Matthews is having a big sleepover at her house this weekend, too.

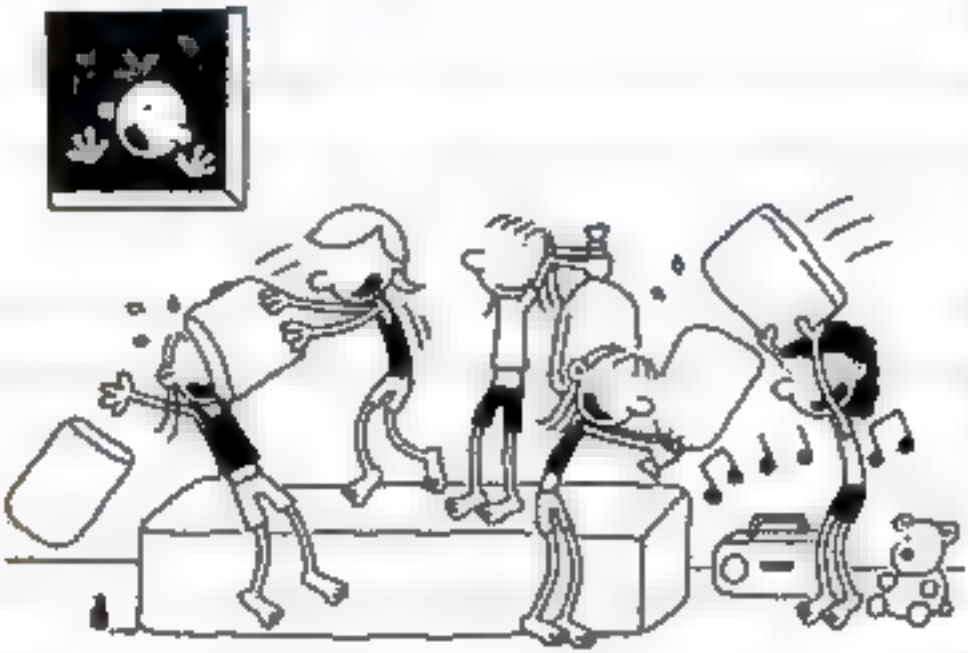
You know how I know that? Well, I found out last night at CCD.

The classroom we use for CCD is the same room the St. Peter's seventh graders use during the day. Last night, I was kind of bored, so I started rummaging around in the cubby under my seat to see if there was anything interesting in there.

I couldn't believe it when I found out the cubby under my desk belonged to none other than Piper Matthews! She had a ton of personal notes and stuff in her cubby, so the rest of CCD flew by for me.

There was one note that mentioned this slumber party Piper is having on Saturday night. And it sounds like all her friends are invited.

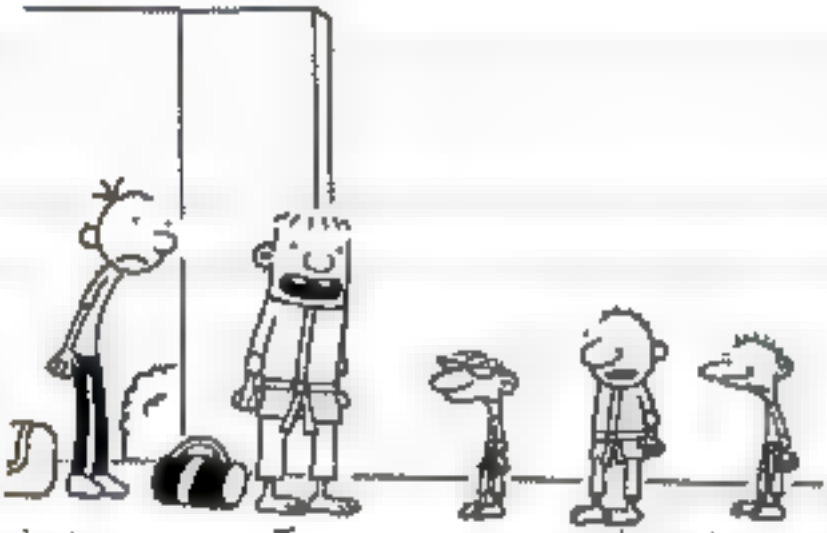
So here's my plan: I'm going to tag along with Rowley for his sleepover, and then at night, I'm going to sneak over to Piper Matthews' house to do a little spying.



I might even tap on the basement window and see if I can get in on the fun.

Saturday, April 23rd

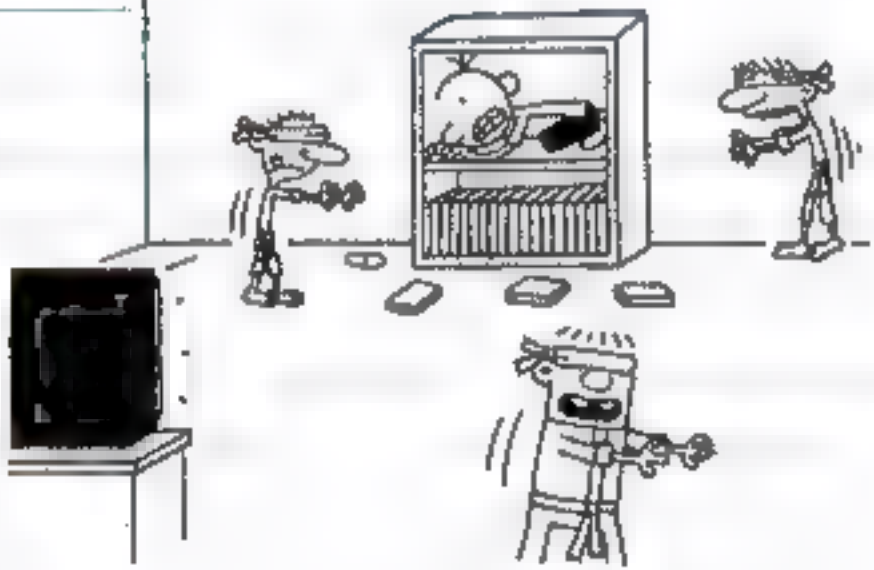
Tagging along with Rowley to his friend Tyler's sleepover was a huge mistake. Rowley never mentioned the fact that none of his karate friends are even out of elementary school. But I guess I should know Rowley well enough by now to expect this sort of thing.



The whole reason I even went to this sleepover was because I figured I could get everyone to sneak out and crash Piper Matthews' party. But these guys won't be interested in girls for another five years.

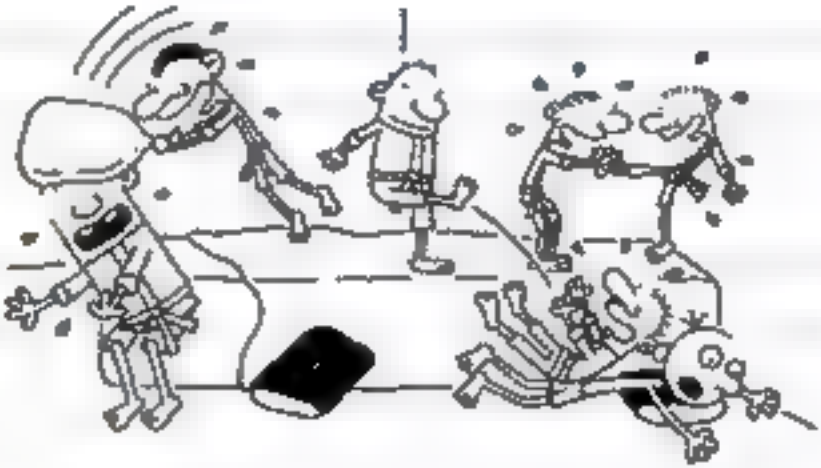
All Rowley and his friends wanted to do tonight was practice their karate moves, so I looked around for some way to entertain myself. I hit the jackpot when I found a stash of R-rated movies that must've belonged to Tyler's Dad.

I suggested that we all watch a movie, but those guys wanted to play Blind Man's Bluff instead. So I put in the movie and tried to watch it while doing my best to avoid getting tagged by one of those goobers.



You know, grown-ups are always saying kids my age have too much access to racy movies and stuff like that. But if the price you have to pay to see something you're not supposed to is to have a bunch of nerdy kids groping at you the whole time, I don't know if it's worth it.

After the movie, I decided I would just try to go to sleep and get this night over with. The rest of the guys were in this giant karate pillow fight, so I wedged myself between a bed and the wall to stay out of their way. But every once in a while, a sweaty kid would land on me.



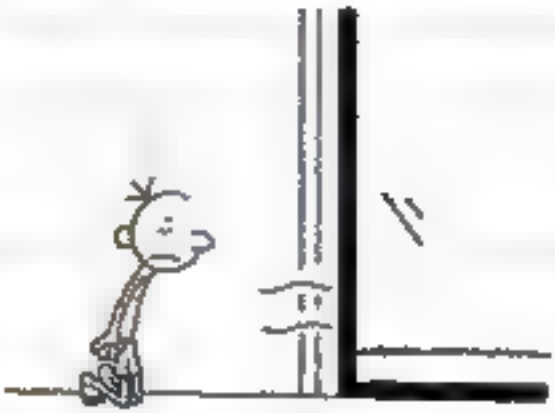
Finally, around midnight, Tyler's Dad came downstairs and told everyone it was time to go to sleep. But even after the lights went out, Rowley's friends kept whispering and giggling anyway.

They must have thought I fell asleep, because at around 2:30, a couple of them tried sneaking up on me to pull the hand-in-warm-water trick.

That's when I got up and moved myself to the living room. And that turned out to be a big mistake.

It was FREEZING in the living room, and I had stupidly left my sleeping bag on the floor down in the basement. But I refused to go back downstairs, so I just tried to conserve as much body heat as possible.

I don't think I got five minutes of sleep all night. And when morning finally came around, I found out why it was so cold in the living room. Some fool had gone and left the sliding glass door open.

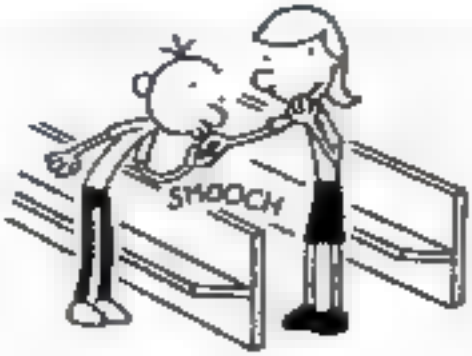


I'm glad Dad wakes up early on Saturdays. Because when I called him at 6:30, he came right over and picked me up.

Sunday, April 24th

Mom and Dad went to church last night, so Uncle Joe came over and took me and Rodrick to church today. I was in a pretty bad mood, mostly because I was running on no sleep. But I perked right up when we walked in and I saw that Piper Matthews was there with her family.

I knew this could be my big chance to make a good impression on Piper. I've never actually shaken hands with her during the "peace be with you" part of church, so I tried to think of some way to make myself stand out. But all my ideas were a little too over-the-top.

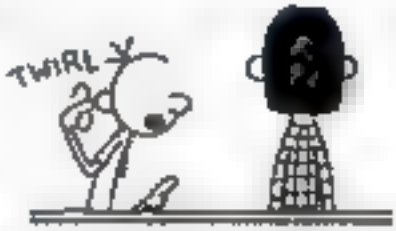


But Uncle Joe totally messed up my chances to shake hands with Piper when he walked us past our regular seats and made us sit in the front row. I was feeling pretty nerdy sitting up front, but it got worse.

During the "Our Father," Uncle Joe grabbed mine and Rodrick's hands and held them for the whole prayer. I tried to pull free, but Uncle Joe had an iron grip.

Now, I don't know how they do things at Uncle Joe's church, but nobody holds hands during the Our Father at my church. So everyone in the church was staring at us.

After the Our Father was over, I made the "koo-koo" sign and pointed to Uncle Joe so everyone behind us would know I wasn't on board with this hand-holding idea.



Even though I was two rows away from Piper, I decided to go ahead and shake her hand during the "peace be with you's" anyway. It was a little awkward, but hopefully Piper noticed my extra effort.

Monday, April 25th

I've been thinking a lot about Piper Matthews, and I realized something. If the only time we ever see each other is at church, our relationship is never going to go anywhere. So I decided if I wanted to take it to the next level, I'd have to call her.

Getting Piper's number was easy enough. Mom is on the Fundraising Committe with Mrs. Matthews, and her number is right on our refrigerator. But before I called Piper, I was going to have to think up a good opening line.

Once I decided to call Piper, I had trouble working up the nerve, and I was ready to chicken out. But then I realized that if Dad is shipping me off to military academy next year, I really don't have anything to lose. So I decided to go for it.

But when I got to the kitchen to grab the cordless phone, the handset wasn't there.

Earlier on, I had told Rodrick I needed to make an important call after dinner, which was a mistake. Because he took the handset and hid it.

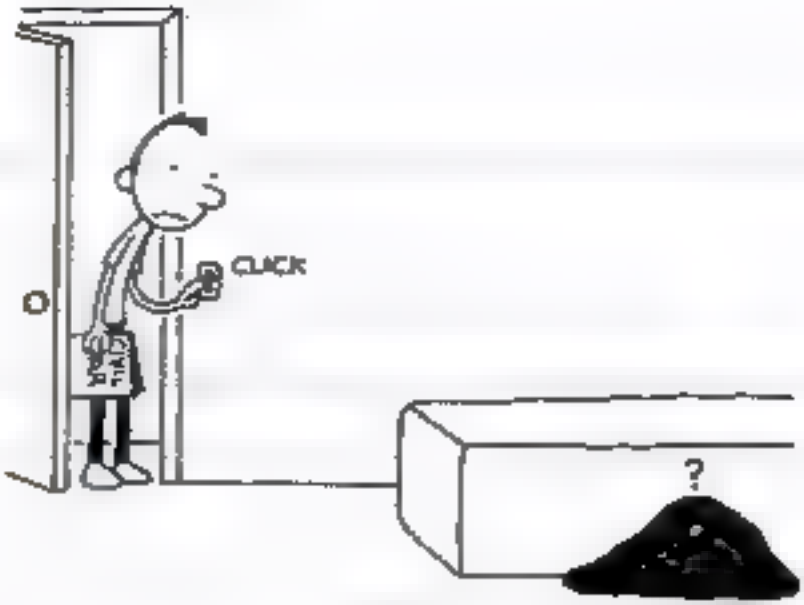
Rodrick told me I should go ahead and just make my call on the speakerphone, so he must have known I was going to call a girl.

But if he thought I was going make my first-ever call to Piper Matthews with him sitting right there, he was out of his mind.

So I went upstairs to Mom's room to use her cordless phone. I turned the lights off so Rodrick wouldn't know I was in there, and I hid under a blanket. Then, I waited a while in the dark to make sure the coast was clear.

But when I started to dial Piper's number, someone opened the door and turned on the light. I thought for sure Rodrick had found me.

But it was just Dad.



I decided to just stay perfectly still and let Dad get whatever he needed, and leave. But Dad didn't just leave. He got into bed and started reading a book.

I should have just showed myself the second Dad walked in the room, but I didn't. And after a few minutes of sitting there on the floor, I knew I was stuck.

I didn't want to give Dad a heart attack by jumping out from under the blanket, so I decided to just sneak out of the room.

I figured if I just crawled along the floor really slowly, Dad wouldn't notice me.

I moved at about an inch a second. I figured it would take me about a half hour to make it all the way out of the room, but there would still be enough time to call Piper.

I was only about five feet from the bedroom door when the phone rang and scared the pants off of me.

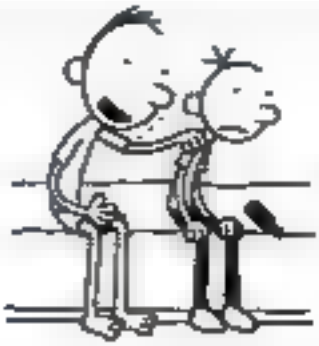
I think Dad really did almost have a heart attack. But after he got over the initial scare, he was pretty mad.

He wanted to know what the heck I was doing on his bedroom floor hiding under the blanket.

I was so shaken up that I didn't have the energy to make up a good lie. So I decided to just tell him the truth.

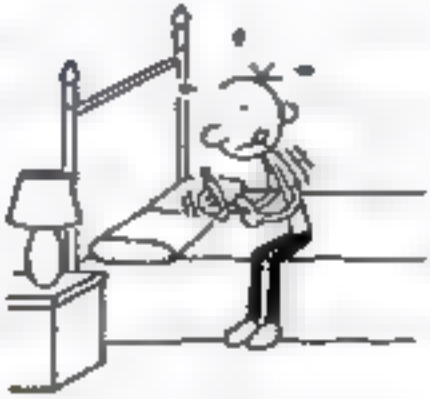
When Dad found out I was trying to call a girl, he seemed relieved. In fact, he was really excited about it.

He told me if I wanted to call a girl, I could use his room at any time. Then he sat me down on his bed and told me about how nervous he was the first time he ever called Mom. He launched into the whole history of their dating. But when he got up to their First Kiss, I excused myself to go do some homework.



Tuesday, April 26th

Tonight I sat down to call Piper Matthews again. But for some reason, I was even more nervous about calling her tonight than I was last night, and I couldn't get myself to do it. I must have sat there with the phone in my hand for an hour.



At about 8:30 I worked up my courage and dialed Piper's number. The phone at her house started to ring, and I tried to think up what to say.

But right then, someone picked up the phone at my house. At first, I thought it was Rodrick trying to listen in on my call.

But as soon as I heard the beeping, I knew it was Mom. Mom has this really bad habit that whenever she picks up the phone to make a call, she never checks to see if anyone is already on it. She just starts dialing her number without checking for a dial tone.

I tried to get Mom's attention so she would hang up the phone, but it was no use.

The next thing I knew, someone answered the phone at the Matthews' house, and Mom was still on the line.

Luckily, it was Mrs. Matthews who picked up, and not Piper. It would have been my worst nightmare to be on a three-way call with Piper Matthews and Mom.

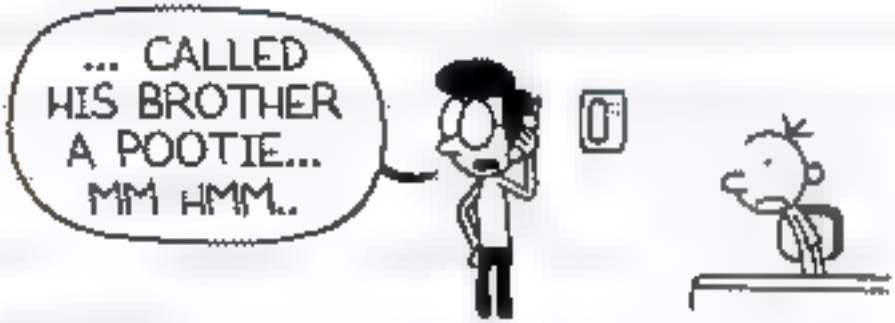
Mom was really confused when Mrs. Matthews answered the phone, since she had dialed someone else's number. I just stayed quiet, because I didn't want Mom to know I was calling Piper.

It took Mom and Mrs. Matthews a minute to figure out who was on the other end of the line. But once they did, they just started chatting like nothing strange had happened.

Mom told Mrs. Matthews she was planning on calling her anyway, and they got into a big long conversation about church fundraising stuff.

I hung up and went downstairs to the kitchen. At one point, Mrs. Matthews was telling Mom about her three girls, so I strained my ears to try to pick up any information about Piper.

But I finally got up and left when Mom started talking about her own kids and the conversation turned to me.



Wednesday, April 27th

I knew Isabella was coming back to the house today, so before I left for school, I dragged my whole bag of laundry downstairs. It wasn't easy, but I didn't want Isabella to get off on a technicality like she did last week.

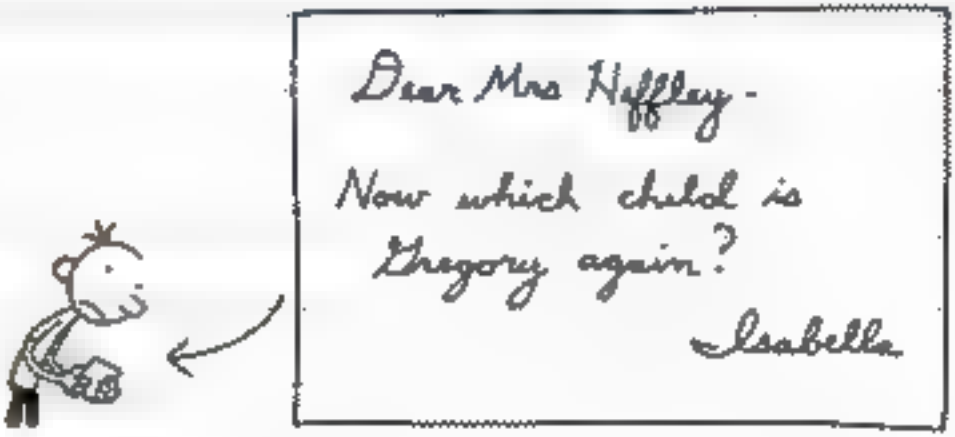
I left a note on the bag to make sure she'd come through for me.

Dear Isabella,

Would you please do Gregory's laundry? I have gone to the trouble of carrying his bag downstairs for you.

Sincerely, Mrs. Heffley

But when I got home, my laundry hadn't been touched. There was just a note from Isabella.

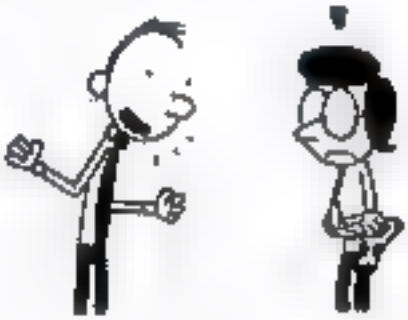


I kind of have to tip my hat to Isabella on her laziness. It looks like I'm going to have to do my own laundry, because at the rate we're going with all this back and forth, it'll take a month just to squeeze a clean pair of socks out of her.

Isabella actually did do SOME laundry today, just not mine. She washed and dried all the clothes that were on Mom and Dad's bedroom floor.

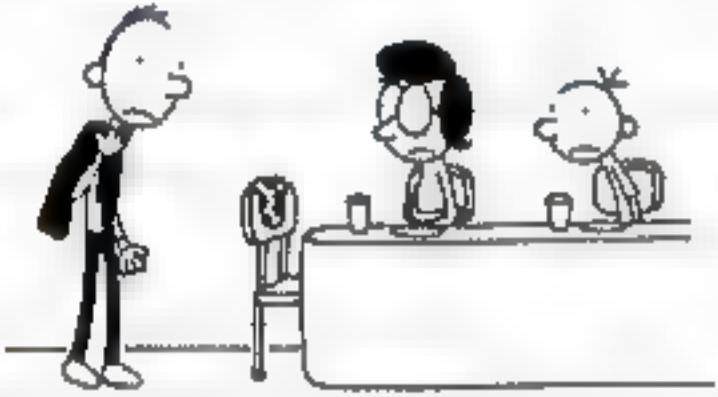
But when Mom was sorting through the pile of folded clothes, she found a pair of women's leopardskin underwear. Mom showed the underwear to Dad and demanded to know where they came from. Dad said he didn't know, but he said maybe they were hers, and she just forgot she owned them.

I doubt Mom really thinks Dad is carrying on with another woman, but his lame theory really seemed to set her off. And right now, Dad is sleeping downstairs on the couch.



Thursday, April 28th

It looks like Mom isn't going to let Dad off the hook on this underwear thing. When Dad came home from work tonight, Mom made sure the panties were in a place he would see them. I guess she's trying to make him feel guilty, or at least make him come up with a better explanation of where they came from.



Things have been really icy between Mom and Dad ever since those panties appeared, and it's no fun being around them. So when Gramma called and asked me if I wanted to go to Bingo with her tonight, I jumped on the chance to get out of the house.

I've never been to Bingo at our church before. It was mostly old people there, so I felt out of place. Gramma pointed out one woman who could play nine cards at once without using a blotter or markers or anything. So I guess she must be some kind of Bingo genius.

Believe it or not, I won the second game, and I yelled out "Bingo!" real loud. But Gramma told me to keep it quiet, because the regulars don't like it when a newcomer wins. The regulars sent someone over to intimidate me, and I hate to admit it, but it totally blew my concentration.

I gave up after a couple more games, and I went to get some food. I was looking at the menu and I saw that they had these chicken drumsticks I really like. The only problem is that they're called "Drummies," so I felt like a dork asking for them. And right when I was about to order, who should get in line behind me but Piper Matthews. I tried to act as cool as possible, but I don't think I pulled it off.

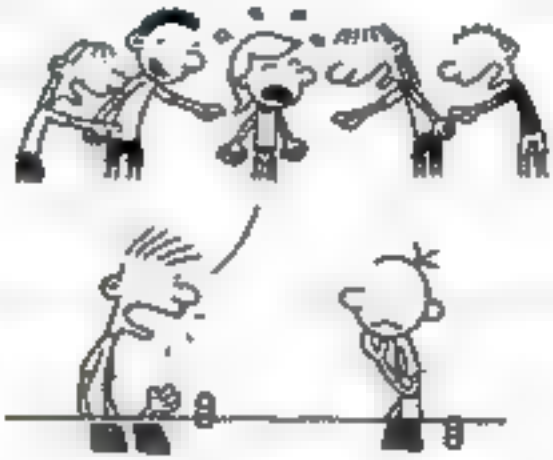
The cashier said the word "Drummes" about 50 times, so I just ended up changing my order to save myself any more embarrassment. I got a meatball sub instead, which turned out to be cold.

I couldn't believe Piper Matthews was actually at church Bingo. Believe me, if I knew Piper came to Bingo, I would have become a regular a long time ago.

And guess who else was there tonight? My old best friend Ben, who moved away a few years ago. Ben was there with his Mom, and I went over and sat with them. Ben goes to St. Peters, so I figured this was a good chance to hit him up for some information that would help me out with Piper.

But Ben didn't really have anything I could use. In fact, all of his stories about Piper made her look pretty bad.

He told about this one episode that happened in the fifth grade. At St. Peters, all the kids have to wear school uniforms, and on days they have P.E., they just wear their gym clothes under their uniforms. Ben told me that one time, when Piper took off her uniform, she was just wearing her Wonder Woman underoos . I guess she forgot to wear her gym clothes that day.



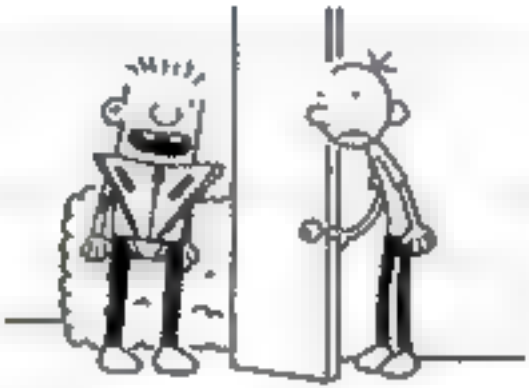
I guess I should be turned off to Piper after hearing a story like that, but the truth is, I'm kind of immune to that sort of thing.

Mom used to teach kindergarten, so believe me, I've heard the dirt on just about every kid in my town. I learned my lesson about talking to Mom about girls. One time, I told Mom that I liked a girl named Sharon Wahowski, and I showed Mom her picture in my yearbook.

Friday, April 29th

I got a really hot tip at school today. Albert Sandy told me that every weekend, the girls in the 7th grade class at St. Peters go to Roll-a-Round, the rollerskating rink over in Crossland. So now I knew where I could find Piper Matthews on a Friday night.

The only problem was getting there. I knew Mom wouldn't drive me to Roll-a-Round, because she says roller rinks are a hang-out spot for "deviants." So I had to get Rowley to talk his mom into taking us. But when Rowley showed up at my front door tonight, I regretted getting him involved.

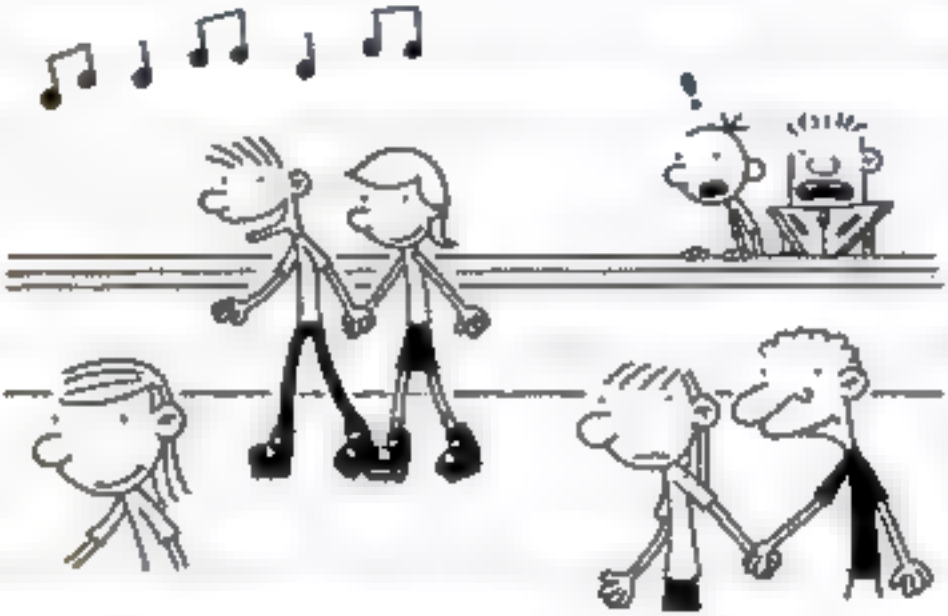


Rowley had his hair all teased up and he was wearing these crazy clothes. I think he was trying to look like his hero, "Joshie." I don't know if Joshie wears sparkly lip gloss, but I'm pretty sure Rowley was wearing some tonight.

We got to Roll-a-Round, and sure enough, Piper Matthews showed up with a big group of her friends. I was trying to work up the nerve to go over and talk to her, but she never broke off from her pack. So I decided to just be patient and wait until she was by herself before I made my move.

The DJ announced Couples Skate, and I knew it could be my chance. Some of Piper's friends went onto the rink with their boyfriends, and Piper was standing there alone.

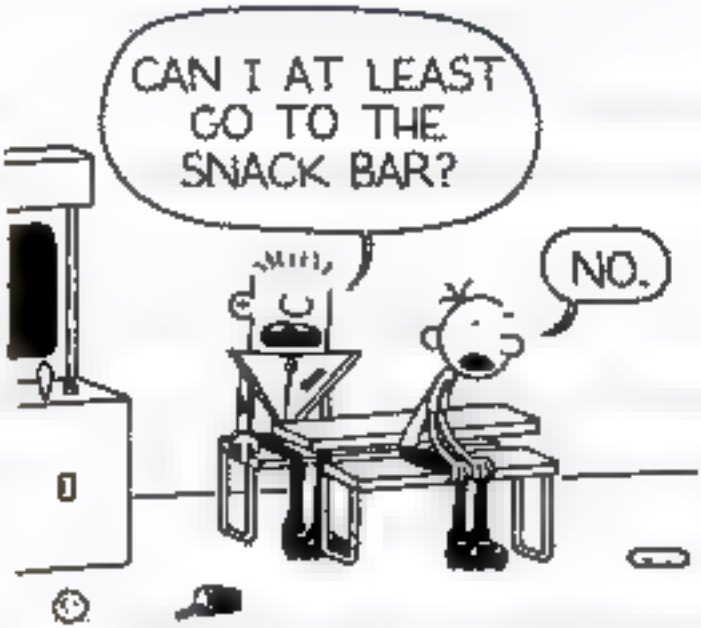
But right when I was about to go over and ask Piper to skate with me, someone else beat me to it. And you'll never guess who it was, either. It was my old best friend, BEN.



Last night, Ben told me a bunch of embarrassing stories about Piper. Tonight I realized Ben probably made all those stories up so he could throw me off the trail and make a move himself.

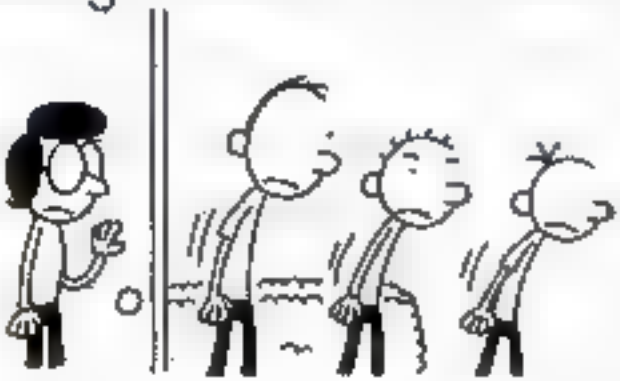
I never figured Ben to be a traitor. It made me really mad seeing Ben and Piper giggling and holding hands.

I kept my eye on the two of them from the arcade area. I wasn't in the mood to skate, so I just stayed there until it was time to go home.



Saturday, April 30th

Mom sent me, Rodrick and Dad off to confession this morning. She said we had to go because me and Rodrick hadn't been in a while, but I have a feeling this had more to do with Dad than me and Rodrick. I think Mom was trying to get Dad to come clean about the leopardskin underwear that was still sitting on his chair in the kitchen.



At St. Peter's, they let you do a face-to-face confession or an anonymous one. In the anonymous confession, the little window is closed so the priest can't see who he's talking to. I always pick anonymous. I don't know what kind of a fool would pick face-to-face.

Anyway, when it was my turn to go into the booth, I saw an opportunity to make the most of it. I was still pretty steamed at Ben for going after the girl I liked, so here was my chance to get back at him.

OK, so maybe it was wrong of me to implicate Ben in a crime he didn't commit. But I'll bet Father Shea was glad to have that mystery solved.

Speaking of mysteries getting solved, the whole leopardskin panties ordeal is finally over. Maurlene and Grandpa came over for brunch today, and when Maurlene saw the underwear on the kitchen chair, she spoke up.

Maurlene must have left her underwear at the house when she stayed over with Grandpa three weeks ago. I guess this means Dad is officially off the hook, but Mom still isn't happy. Because now she knows Maurlene spent a weekend sleeping in her bed.

Sunday, May 1st

Today, Dad sat me down at the kitchen table and delivered some very bad news: I'm officially enrolled at Spag Union Military Academy. I've known this was coming for two months, but I've been praying Dad would forget or just change his mind.

Dad was showing me the Spag Union brochure and telling me how great of a school it is and all that, but I wasn't really paying attention. My brain was too busy plotting some way to escape my fate.

But then Dad said something that definitely caught my ear.

Dad said he signed me up to go to Spag Union for the next school year. I always thought I was going to get sent to Spag Union after I was done with the eighth grade, and that I'd at least have one more year to enjoy my freedom.

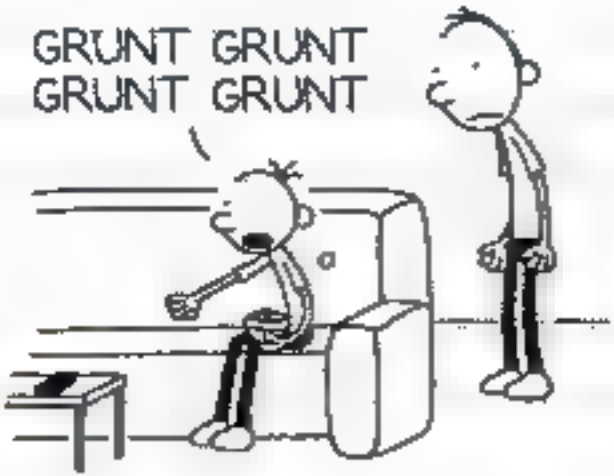
When Dad told me that, I felt like I was going to pass out. But it got much worse. Dad said he signed me up for the SUMMER session, so I could get a "head start" on all the cadets who will show up in the fall. Meaning I'm signed up to go to Spag Union in June, ONE MONTH FROM NOW. When I heard this, I was so shocked I was actually speechless.

You know, if I had played my cards right over the past two months, I'll bet I could've gotten Dad to change his mind on this whole Spag Union idea.

All I would've had to do was act a little more manly when Dad was around, and I wouldn't have had anything to worry about right now.

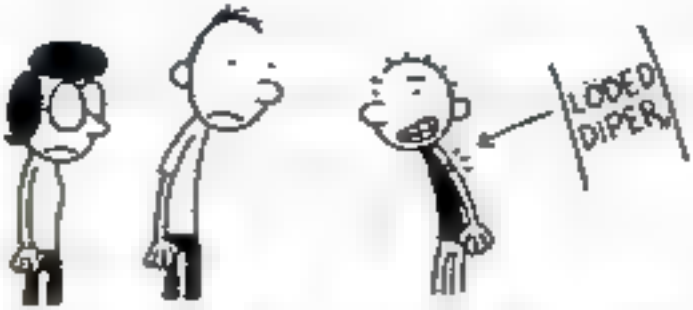
But I've kind of let my guard down, and last night is a prime example of what I'm talking about.

Last night, I sat down to eat ice cream and watch some t.v. But after I got comfortable, I realized the remote was on the coffee table. So instead of putting my ice cream down and leaning over to get the remote, I tried to use The Force instead.



I don't know how long Dad was standing behind me, but I must've been trying to make that remote levitate for 15 minutes. And who knows? Maybe that was the straw that broke the camel's back and made Dad sign the papers for Spag Union.

Then again, maybe I can blame Rodrick for this mess I'm in. I'll bet Dad thinks if I stay in public school, I'm going to end up just like Rodrick. Yesterday, Mom gave Rodrick money to use for his prom. But Rodrick decided to blow all the money on a tattoo of his band's name instead.



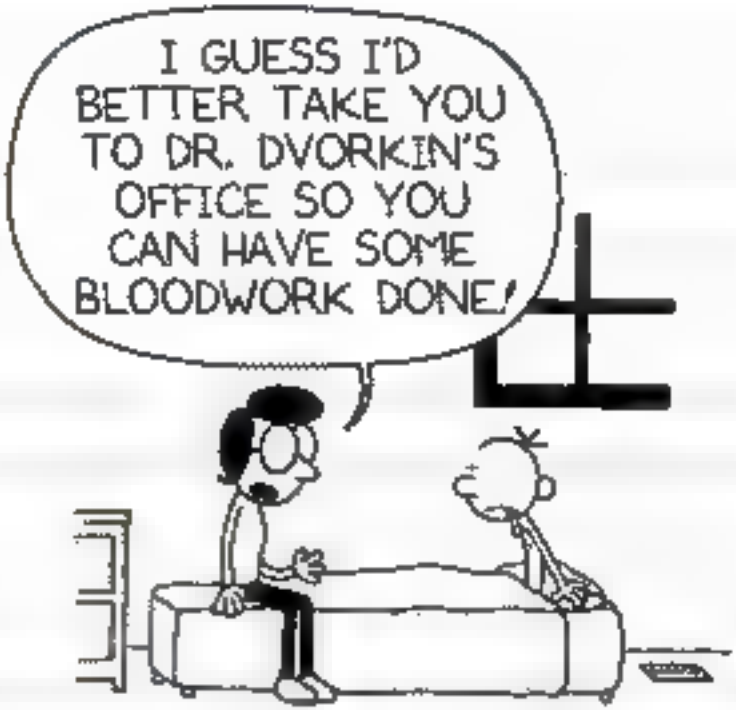
Whatever Dad's reasons are, I now have exactly 31 days to figure a way out of this situation.

Monday, May 2nd

I spent the whole day yesterday stewing about this Spag Union situation. So when I woke up this morning, I really wasn't in the mood to go to school. I decided to just fake being sick and take a personal day.

Mom would never let me just skip school, so that's why I have to fake being sick. But it's practically impossible to fool Mom into thinking you're sick if you're not. She can almost always sniff it out. The only time I ever got by her was when I faked a fever by putting a wet face cloth over the heating vent, and then putting it on my forehead right before Mom took my temperature.

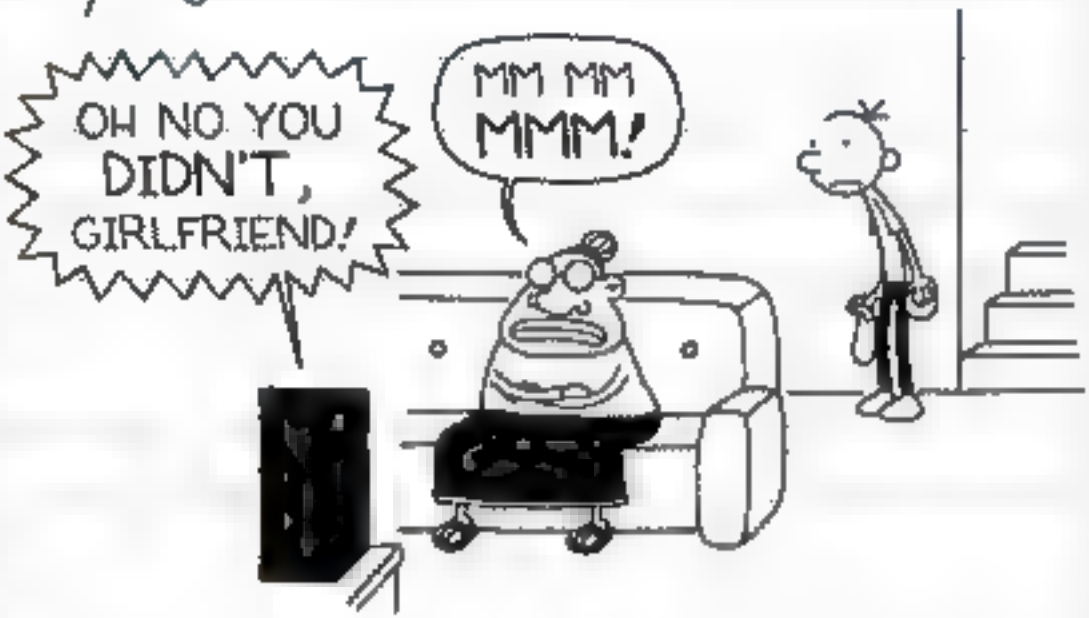
Even though I fooled her, it wasn't worth it. Mom stayed home from work with me and my plan to relax and have a day to myself was totally ruined.



Luckily, today, Mom left for work early, so the only person I had to convince was Dad. And when I told Dad I was sick, he just took my word for it.

After everyone left the house and the coast was clear, I went downstairs. My plan was to pig out on the snacks in the pantry and play video games all day long.

But I forgot Isabella was coming today, and when I got downstairs, she was sitting on the couch in the family room. And since Mom does all of Isabella's work for her, Isabella didn't have anything to do. So she just hogged the t.v. all day long.

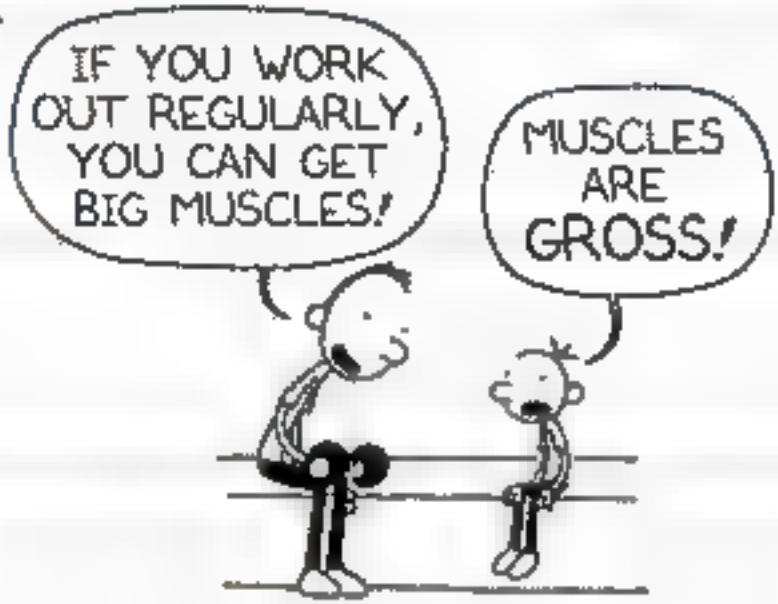


I didn't feel like watching talk shows with Isabella, so I just went back upstairs and spent the day in my room. I read some comic books, but it wasn't really the great day it could've been.

I'm glad I took the day off, anyway. Last quarter I made the mistake of not missing any days of school, and I promised myself that wouldn't happen again.

Tuesday, May 3rd

You know, the whole reason Dad is sending me to Spag Union is to make a man out of me. But I realized if I can get him to think I'm tough enough already, maybe I can get him to change his mind. The only problem is that I've got about 13 years of wimpiness to erase from Dad's mind first.



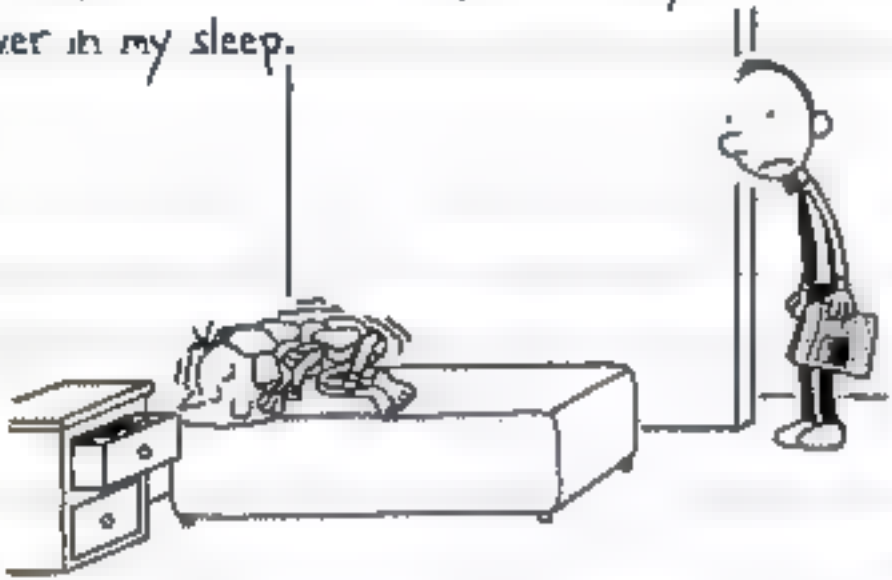
Last night I racked my brain trying to think of something that I do that impresses Dad, so I could build on it.

All I could think of is that Dad seems pretty impressed that I only need one quilt to cover me in bed at night, even when it's really cold. So I was trying to think of a way to take that and run with it.

It's too bad it's already spring, because if it was January right now, I could really blow him away.

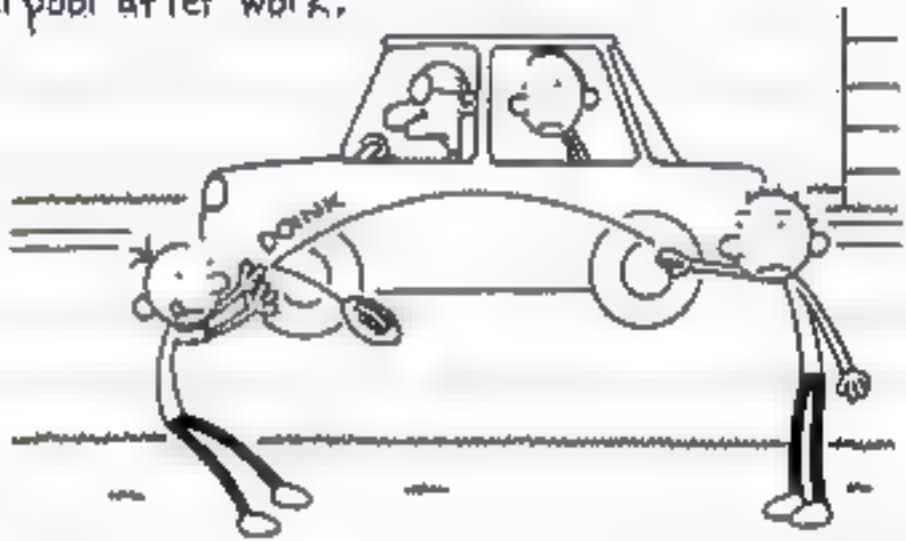
Last night when I went to bed, I tossed my quilt on the floor. I figured Dad would be pretty impressed at my toughness when he came in to wake me up in the morning and saw me sleeping without needing a blanket or sheet or anything.

But I guess I got cold in the middle of the night, because when Dad came into my room this morning, I was covered in a pile of underwear. I must've grabbed the whole pile from my dresser drawer in my sleep.



So that didn't go as well as I planned.

Later on, I made sure Dad got to see my athletic side. I asked Rodrick to throw the football with me in the front yard, and I timed it so Dad would see us out there when he drove up with his carpool after work.



Dad was probably surprised to see me being so sporty, but I think this might end up being a one-shot deal. Rodrick made me pay him 25 cents a throw, and I just don't have the cash to keep this up as a regular thing.

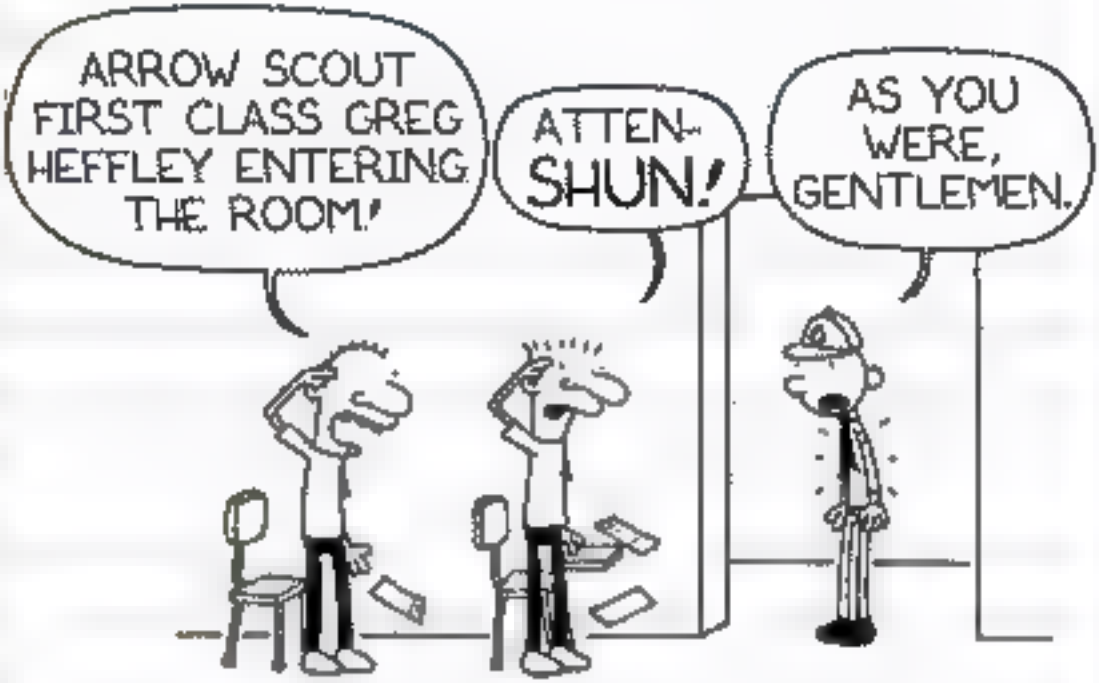
Wednesday, May 4th

Today, Rowley was telling me how he's going to join the Boy Scouts, and all of the sudden, a light bulb went on in my head. Joining the Boy Scouts could be just what I need to get Dad to forget about sending me to Military Academy.

Dad's been trying to sell me on joining the Boy Scouts for about three years now. But I never really paid much attention to him before.

Now, I've got a real good reason to sign up. If I join the Boy Scouts and stick with it, Dad will see me in a whole new light. And then he'll forget all the reasons he wanted to send me to Spag Union in the first place.

Plus, it'll be good to finally start getting some respect from the other kids at school.

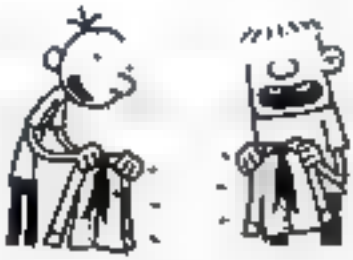


Me and Rowley are joining Troop 42 which is about 20 miles down the highway. Troop 1020 is actually right in our neighborhood, but I always see those guys doing a bunch of community service on the weekend, and that's a little too hardcore for me. Collin and a bunch of other wimps are in Troop 42, so I figure I can handle it.

When Dad was driving me to the lodge to sign up tonight, we passed by Troop 1020 cleaning up the highway. I had to distract Dad so he didn't see those guys and start asking questions.

Thursday, May 5th

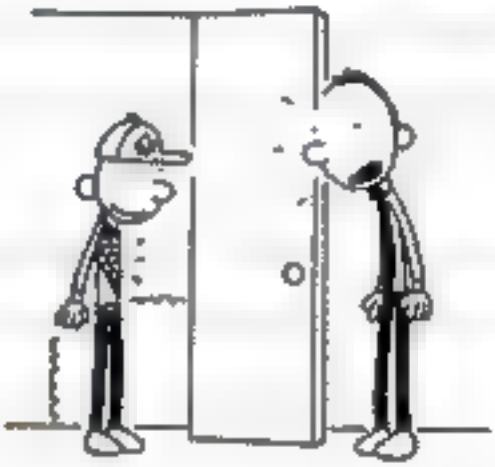
Me and Rowley went to our first Boy Scouts meeting tonight. After we said the Pledge of Allegience and learned a secret handshake, they handed us our uniforms.



I was just glad to have some clean clothes to wear. I've been slacking on laundry again, and the shirt I've been wearing the past few days is getting a little crusty.

Tonight everyone in the Troop was working on getting Merit Badges. Merit Badges are these little patches you can earn by learning different things like Citizenship and First Aid and stuff like that.

As soon as I found out about Merit Badges, I knew I hit the jackpot. If I can load up on Merit Badges, I'll have proof that I have a lot of manly skills, and Dad will see he doesn't really need to send me off to Spag Union.



Me and Rowley flipped through the Boy Scout manual to pick what we wanted to work on first. Rowley wanted to do something hard like Wilderness Survival or Personal Fitness. But I needed to start racking up Merit Badges real quick, so I looked for something nice and easy.

We ended up settling on Wood Carving. We got whittling knives and some wood from Mr. Barrett, the Scoutmaster, and we got to work.

Wood Carving was a lot harder than I thought. First of all, it took forever to try to whittle your wood block into anything. And within five minutes, Rowley had a splinter. So we went to Mr. Barrett to see if there was something less dangerous we could work on.

Mr. Barrett said that if we were having trouble with the wood, we could carve soap instead. That's when I knew I picked the right Troop when I signed up with Troop 42.

I found out that if you get soap wet enough, you don't even have to use a knife at all. You can just squeeze it into whatever shape you want. My first creation was a sheep. I turned it in to Mr. Barrett, and he checked one carving off my list.

A couple minutes later, I turned my sheep upside down and resubmitted it as the Titanic.

I'm glad Mr. Barrett doesn't have the toughest standards. Hopefully I'll be able to cut corners on my next Merit Badge, too, which will be Bird Study.

Friday, May 6th

Last night at Boy Scouts, a couple of eighth-graders told me and Rowley that May 6th was National Boy Scout Pride Day, so we needed to wear our uniforms to school.

But when me and Rowley showed up at school today, we found out those guys were just messing with us.

Speaking of Boy Scouts, there's a Father/Son campout this weekend, and I signed me and Dad up to go.

I'm not really big into camping, but I figured if Dad saw me doing outdoorsy stuff, it would really help out with my image.

I thought Dad would be excited about the trip, because he loves all that wilderness stuff. But when I told him about the campout at dinner tonight, he said he wasn't going. Even though Dad likes camping, the thing I forgot about him is how much he hates teenagers.

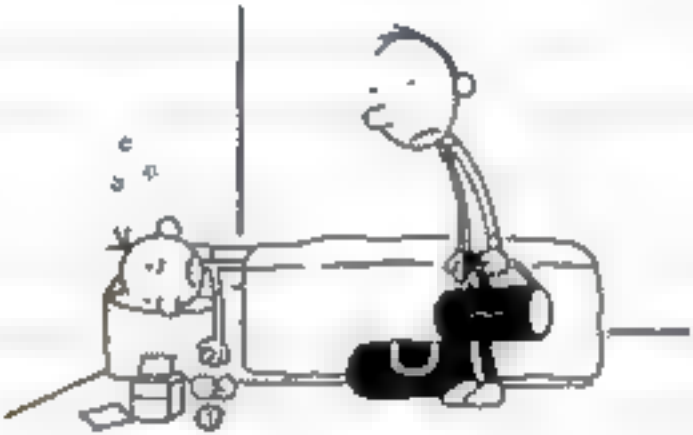
But I couldn't really afford to take no for an answer on this one. So I made a call from the kitchen phone and I made sure I talked loud enough for Mom to hear.

That did the trick. Dad was grumbling the whole time he was packing up the car tonight, so I feel a little bad about twisting his arm. But if this trip makes Dad see me in a new light, it was totally worth it.

Saturday, May 7th

When Dad came into my room to wake me up this morning, I was too sick to even get out of bed. And not pretend sick, either. Sick for real.

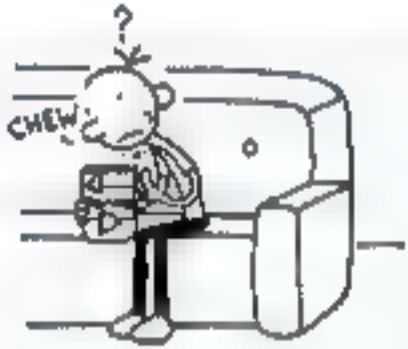
It really stinks, because we were supposed to go to the Father/Son campout today. But I was up all night coughing and sneezing, and I wasn't in any kind of shape to go camping.



I know exactly who to blame for me getting sick, too: Manny. He's had a cold the past couple of days and he's been spreading his germs on everything.

Manny doesn't wash his hands or cover his mouth when he sneezes. And when he does actually use a Kleenex, he has a really bad habit of stuffing it back in the box after he's done with it. So you really have to be on your guard when he's got a cold.

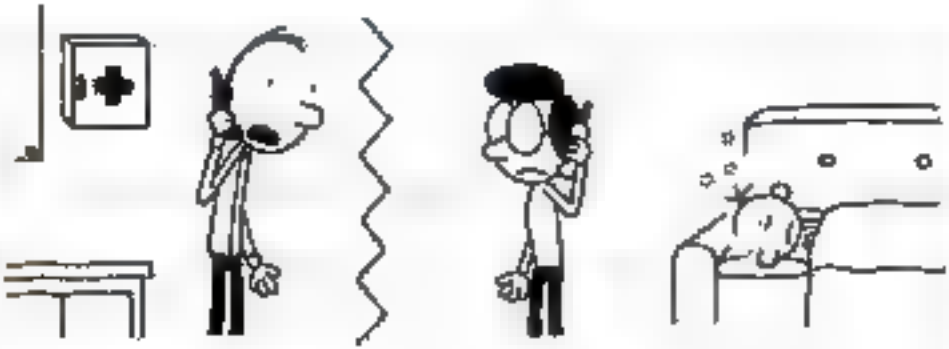
I was trying to make sure Manny didn't get me sick, but he got me anyway. I was eating a bag of Doritos last night, and they tasted really plain. That's when I remembered that sometimes, Manny licks all the flavor dust off the Doritos and puts them back in the bag. So I'm sure that's how I got his cold.



When Dad found out I was sick, he was pretty relieved, because he thought he was off the hook for the camping trip. But Mom had volunteered Dad to be one of the drivers, so he couldn't get out of going. And believe me, he was not happy about it.

The whole point of this trip was for Dad to see me acting manly and doing outdoor stuff. I just hoped the rest of the guys in Troop 42 would make me look good by association.

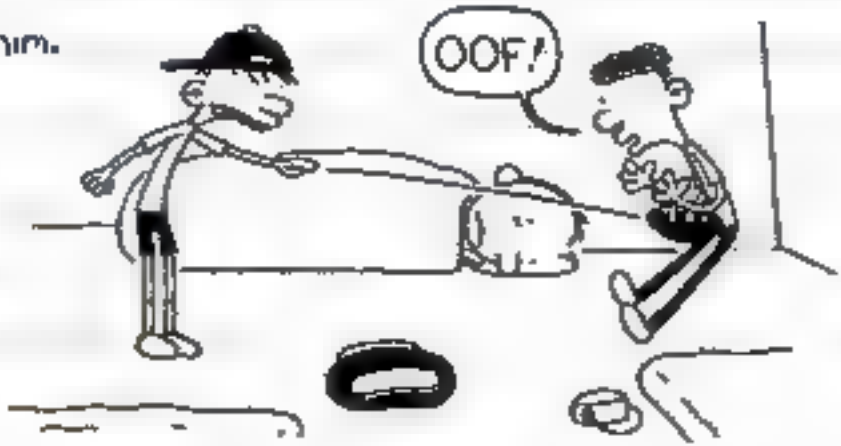
But tonight at around 1:00 in the morning, Dad called Mom from the campground emergency room.



I didn't get all the details, but here's what I picked up from listening in.

First of all, it rained all day at the campground, so everyone was stuck in their tent. Dad got paired up with Garrett Newson and his brother Chip, since their Dad couldn't go. Apparently Garrett and Chip drank a bunch of soda right before bedtime, so they were really wired up, throwing a Nerf football around the tent.

At around midnight, Garrett pegged Chip in the stomach with the football and knocked the wind out of him.



That made Chip wet his pants, and Garrett stood there laughing at him.

Chip got really mad, and he attacked Garrett. He bit him right in the middle of the back, and wouldn't let go. So Dad had to pry them apart.

Dad had to bring Garrett to the hospital, I guess to get rabies shots. And it's probably safe to say that after this weekend, Dad's not all that impressed with Troop 42.

Sunday, May 8th

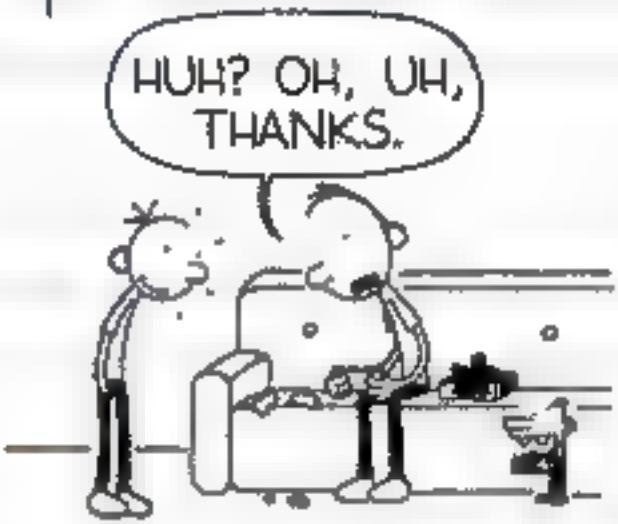
With all this Boy Scouts stuff going on, I completely forgot about Mother's Day. So I didn't have a gift or card or ANYTHING.

I was going to ask Dad to take me to the store so I could get Mom something, but Dad was still recovering from the whole campout fiasco. And I could tell he wasn't in any kind of mood to do me any favors, anyway.

So I had to come up with some sort of home-made gift to give to Mom.

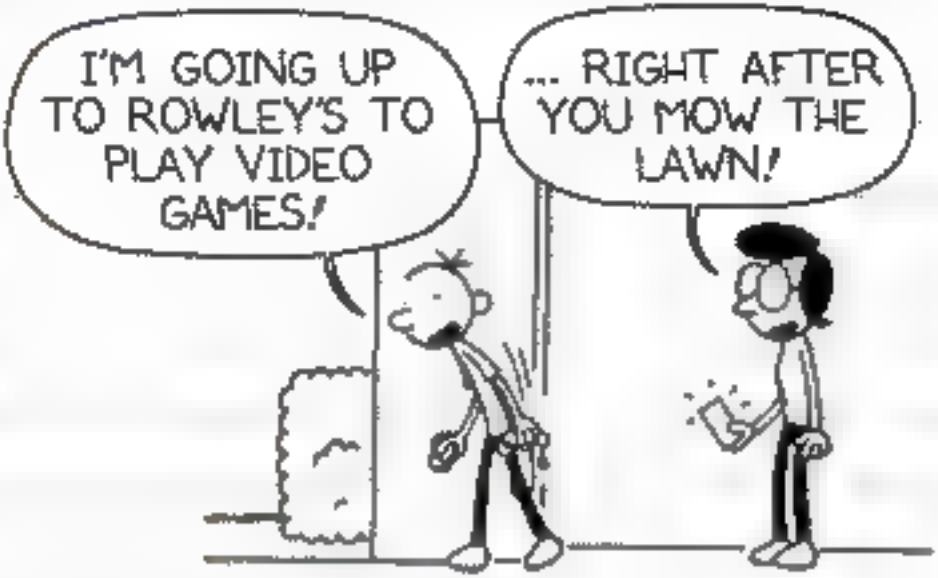
Last year I forgot about Mother's Day until the last minute, too, so I made Mom a chore coupon book. Each coupon is good for something like "one free lawn mowing" or "one free window washing" and that kind of thing.

Whenever I give Dad a chore book, everything works out great. Dad either loses my coupon books or throws them out, because he's never even turned in a single coupon.

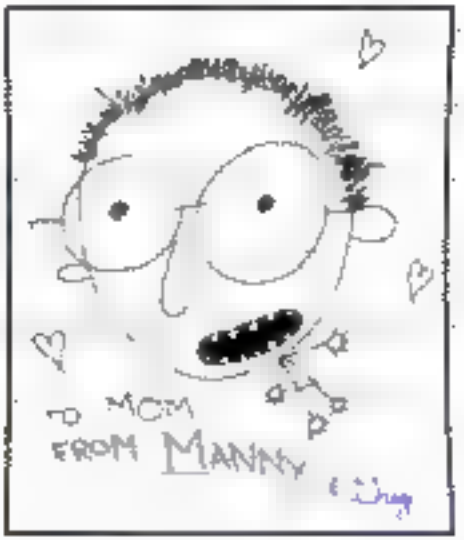


But when I gave Mom a chore coupon book, she used up every single one of her coupons in two weeks.

So I won't repeat that mistake again.



I tried to think of something else I could make for Mom instead, but I ran out of time. So I ended up having to just piggyback on Manny's gift.



Monday, May 9th

Today I found out the school paper is looking for a new cartoonist. There's only one comic slot in the school paper, and up until now, this kid named Bryan Little has been hogging it all to himself.

Bryan has a comic named Wacky Dawg, and when it started off, it was actually pretty funny. But lately, Bryan's been using it for his own personal agenda, which I guess is the reason they let him go.

As soon as I heard the announcement, I knew I had to try out for the slot. Wacky Dawg made Bryan Little a celebrity at our school, and I wanted to get in on some of that kind of fame.

Rowley wanted to write a cartoon, too, so we decided to team up and write a comic strip together. Mom got us some sketch pads and pens, and we got to work.

We banged out a bunch of characters real quick, but that turned out to be the easy part. When we tried to think up some good jokes, that's where we hit a wall.

I finally came up with a good solution. I made up a cartoon where something wacky happens in every strip, and then the punchline is always "Zoo Wee Mama!" That way we wouldn't have to write real jokes. For our first couple of strips, I did the writing and drew the characters, and Rowley drew the word bubbles and boxes.

Rowley started to complain that he wasn't getting enough to do, so I let him write a few. But to be honest with you it was pretty easy to see the difference in quality.

Eventually I got kind of sick of the Zoo Wee Mama idea so I pretty much let Rowley take over the whole operation.

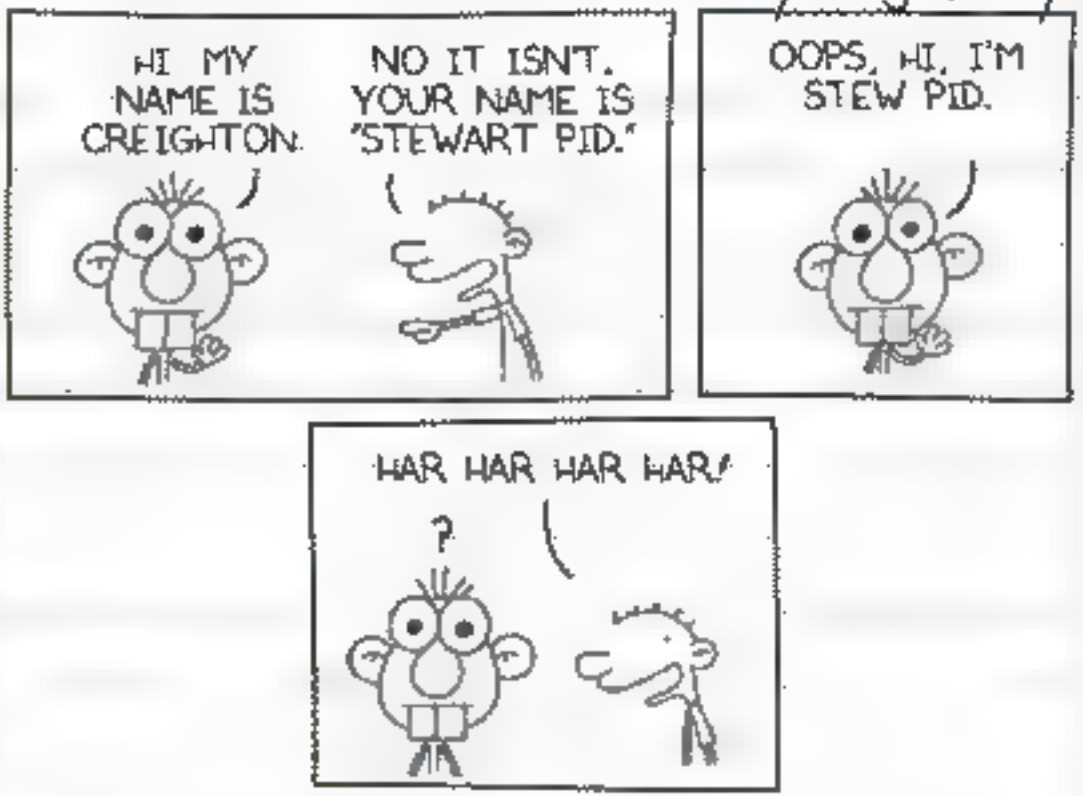
I told Rowley maybe we should come up with some new ideas for comics, but he said he just wanted to keep writing Zoo Wee Mamas. So he took all his comics and went home, which is fine with me.

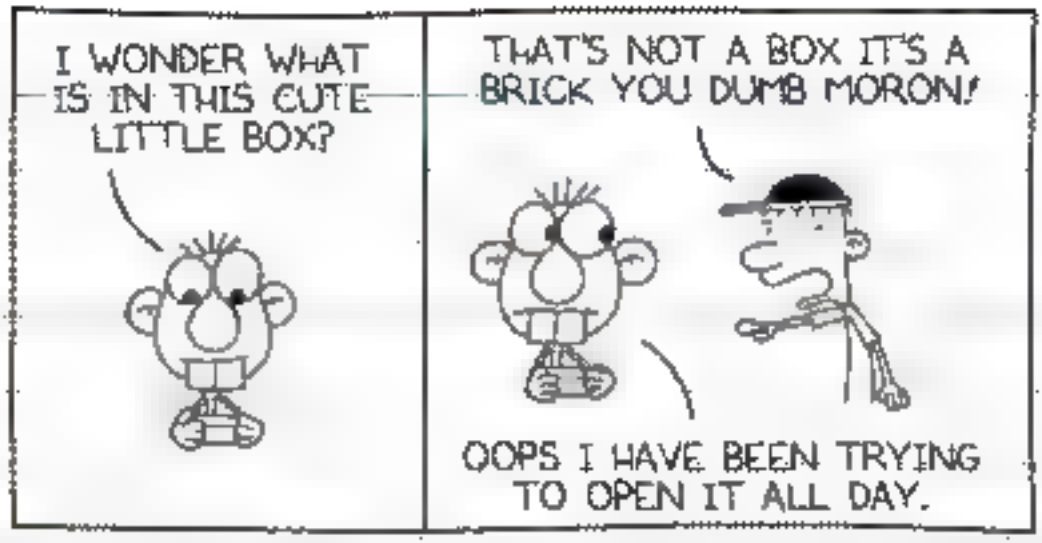
I don't really want to be partners with a kid who doesn't draw noses yet, anyway.

Tuesday, May 10th

The deadline for handing in comic submissions for the school paper was 3:00 today, and at noon, I still didn't have an idea for a strip. But during Social Studies, I came up with this character called "Creighton the Cretin," and I got on a roll.

CREIGHTON THE CRETIN by Greg Heffley





You had to turn in five comics, so I was drawing right up to the deadline. Mr. Winsky is going to pick the winner tomorrow, so I'm keeping my fingers crossed.

Wednesday, May 11th

During morning announcements today, I got some really good news.

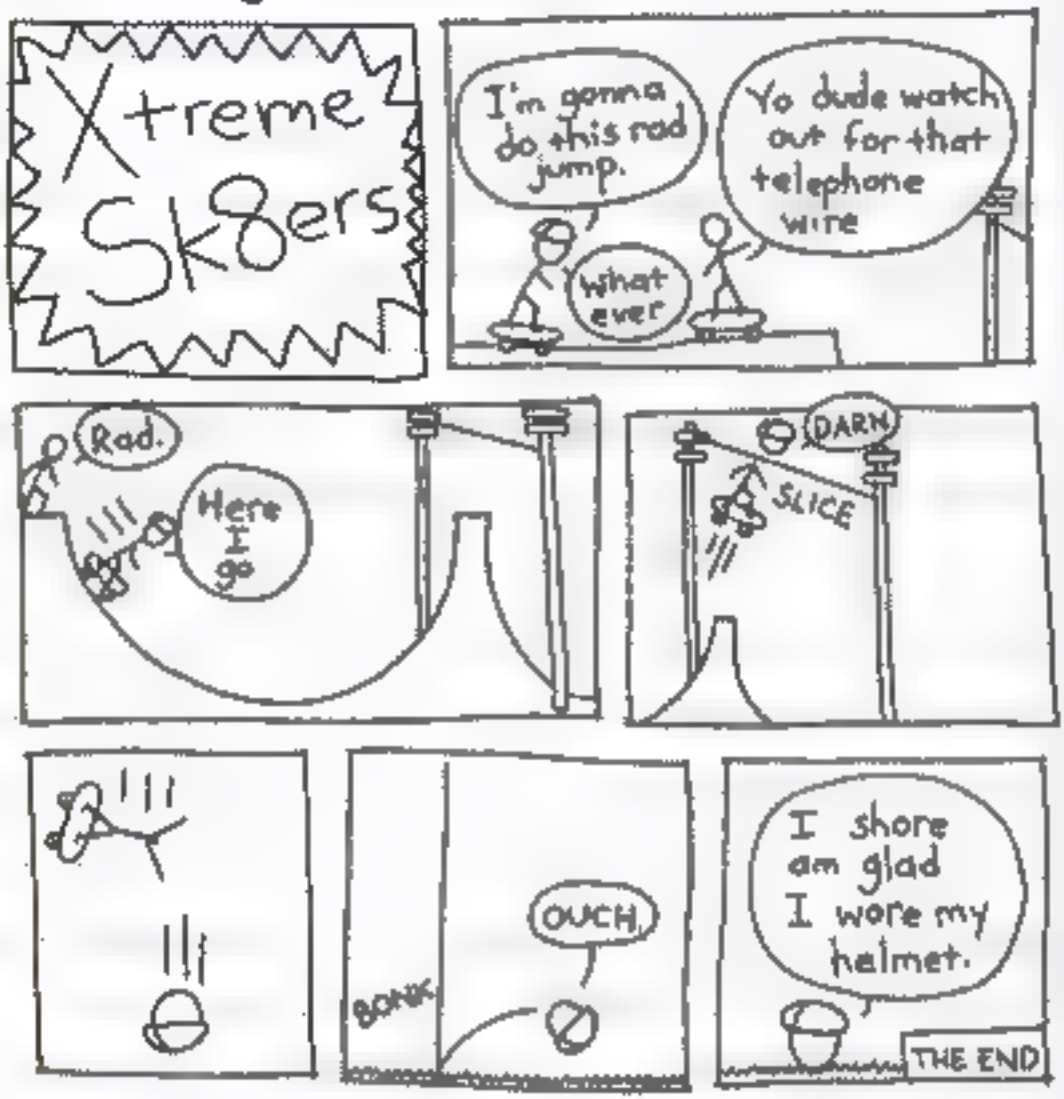
You know, it's about time something good happened to me. I'm pretty much one of the best people I know, but for some reason I can never seem to catch a break.

But to be honest with you, I'm not all that surprised my comic got picked.

If you saw the other cartoons that got submitted, you'd know what I was talking about.

When I turned in my strips to the front office yesterday, I took a peek at the other comics, and most of them were garbage.

One comic that had potential was called "Xtreme Sk8rz." If the kid who drew it could learn to draw, then he might actually have something. Because his jokes weren't all that bad.



Another one that wasn't terrible was this strip called "Dumb Teachers at Our School" by a kid named Bill Tritt. Bill is always in detention so I guess he's got a bone to pick with just about every teacher in our school.

I think Bill's big mistake was putting Mr. Winsky in one of his strips. Mr. Winsky is the editor of the school paper and he was the guy in charge of picking the new cartoonist.

Rowley turned in his Zoo Wee Mama strips, but they were the ones he wrote himself. The only strip I really saw as a threat was a comic called "Pikki and Matz" by this eighth-grade girl named Sara Choo. It's not really that her comics were all that funny, but most grown-ups can't resist cute animals.

So I slipped Sara's submission under a big pile of papers. And by the time anyone finds those comics, Sara will have graduated already.

Thursday, May 12th

Today, the new edition of the school paper came out, and everyone was reading it at lunch. I was dying to grab a copy to see my comic, but I thought that might make me look too nerdy. So I decided to play it cool instead. I have to admit, I got a pretty big kick out of seeing everyone reading my work.

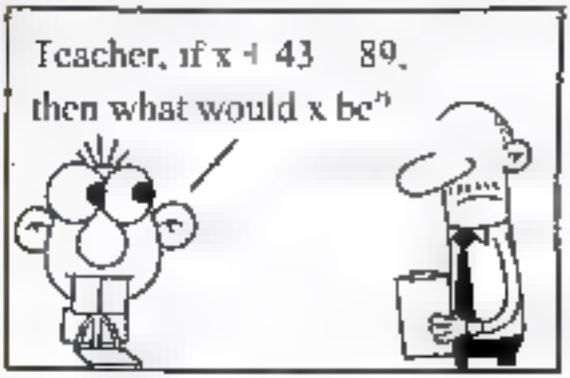
I sat at the end of the table so there would be plenty of room for me to start signing autographs for my new fans. But nobody was coming over to tell me how great my comic was, and nobody was even laughing, from what I could tell. I knew something was seriously wrong.

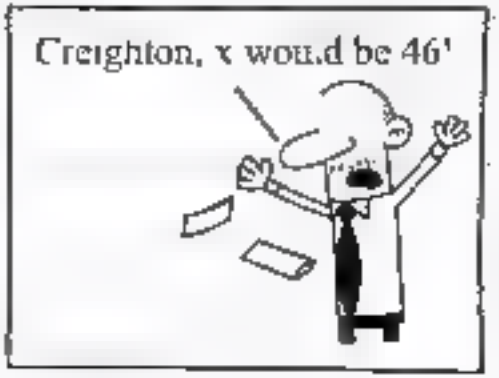
So I picked up a paper and went into the bathroom. But when I opened the paper to the comics page, I practically had a heart attack.

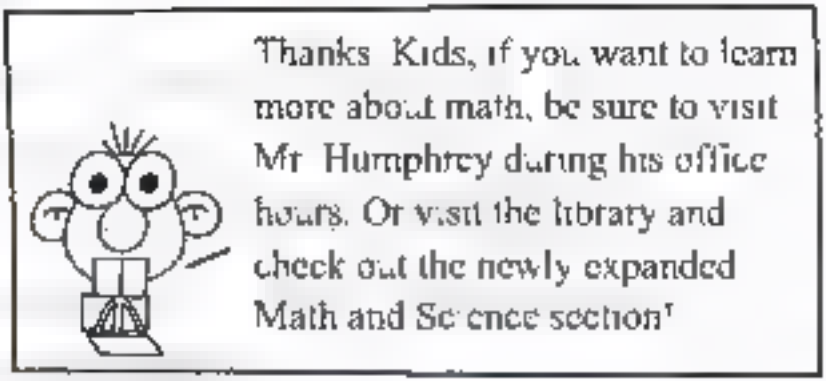
Yesterday, Mr. Winsky told me he might make some "minor edits" to my comic before it went to print. I thought he meant he was just going to correct spelling mistakes and grammar, so I was fine with it. But he totally butchered my strip.

The comic he ruined was one of my favorite ones, too. In the original, Creighton the Cretin is taking a math test, and he accidentally eats it. And then the teacher yells at him for being a stupid moron. But after Mr. Winsky got his hands on the comic, I practically couldn't even recognize it as the same strip.

Creighton the Curious Student by Gregory Heffley







So instead of having my classmates line up to get my autograph, they were lining up to punch me. And the thing is, I don't really blame them.

Friday, May 13th

Last week's Father/Son campout didn't turn out the way I wanted it to, and I've been trying to come up with a way to make it right. So I decided to ask Dad to take me camping this weekend.

I've been going to Boy Scout meetings for a couple weeks now, and I think I've actually learned a thing or two about camping. So a weekend with Dad will be a good chance to show off some of my new skills.

Dad seemed pretty enthusiastic about the idea, and things were looking good. But then Mom got involved. She decided to make Rodrick come along for the trip, because she said it will be a good father/son "bonding" experience.

This really stinks, because right now, me and Rodrick are in a big fight. It started yesterday when Mom was giving Rodrick a haircut. Mom has this mumu she used to wear when she was pregnant with Manny, and she made Rodrick wear it to keep the hair off his clothes. And when I saw Rodrick like that, I couldn't just walk by without recording it.

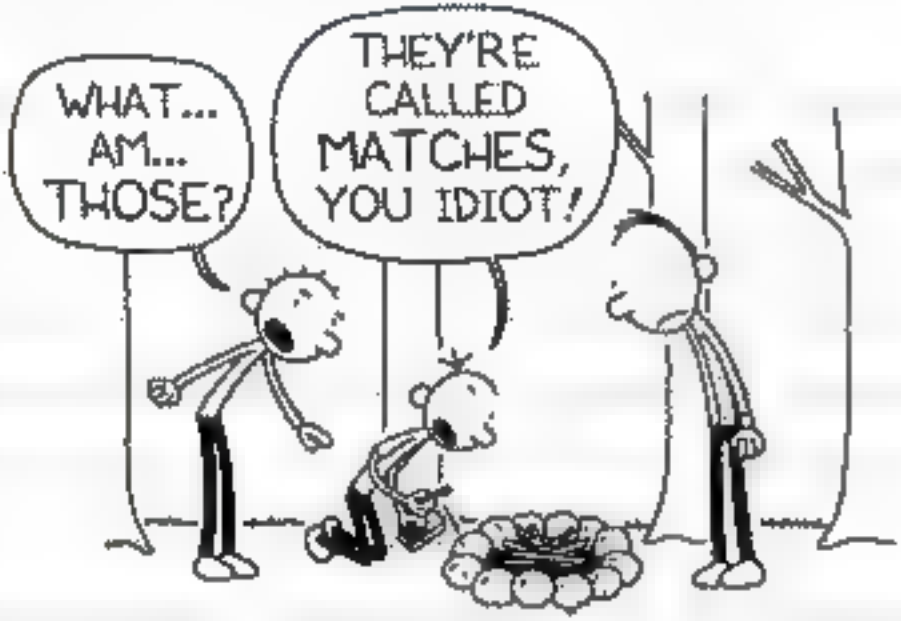
Rodrick got REALLY mad after I took the picture, which is pretty ironic. Because Rodrick took a picture of me when Mom was cutting my hair yesterday.

Anyway, Rodrick got his revenge on me yesterday. I didn't even realize what he did until I woke up last night in the middle of a nightmare where I dreamed I was sleeping in nest of red ants.

So hopefully, this means we're even. Because I don't need to be out in the wilderness with an angry Rodrick for a whole weekend.

Actually, having Rodrick come along for the trip might work to my advantage. Rodrick was never a Boy Scout, and I bet he doesn't know the first thing about camping.

So having him there is only going to make me look good by comparison.



Saturday, May 14th

On the way to the campground this morning, the sky started getting dark, and then it started to rain. I wasn't too worried, because our tent is waterproof, and we packed ponchos.

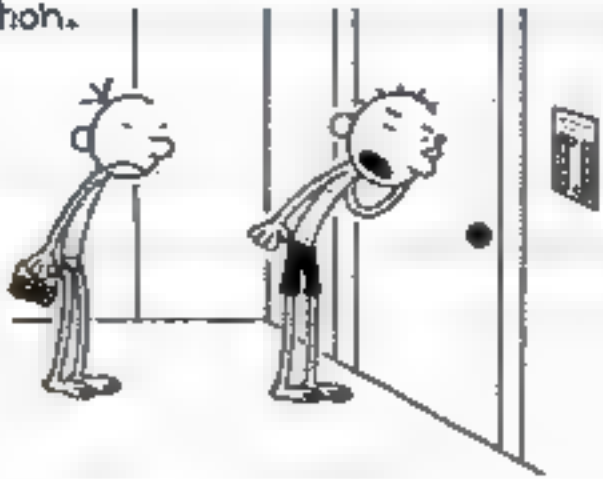
But by the time we got to our campsite, it was six inches under water.

We would've just turned around and gone home, but Mom was having a big Tupperware party with all the neighborhood ladies today, and Dad didn't want to go back. So we just drove around until we found a hotel.

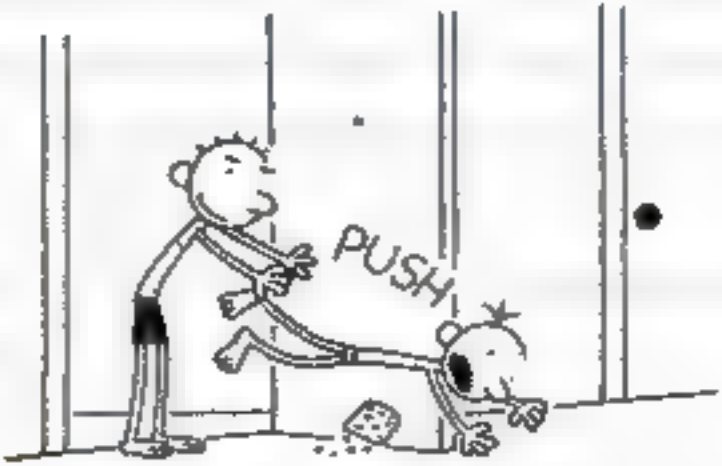
Around 11:00 tonight, Dad went downstairs to the front desk to complain about the noise coming from the room above us. I was hungry, so I broke out some trail mix I packed in case we went biking. Rodrick told me he wanted some, but I knew he'd just eat all the M&M's and leave me with the peanuts and raisins, so I said no.

A couple minutes later, Rodrick was looking out the peephole on our door, and he called me over to come look.

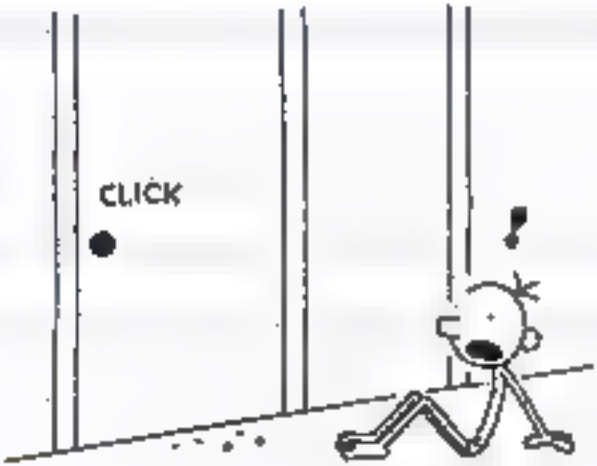
I just ignored him at first, but then he said he just saw Piper Matthews and a couple of her friends walk by our room, and that definitely got my attention.



But when I stepped up to look through the peephole, Rodrick gave me a shove that pushed open the door and sent me out into the hallway.



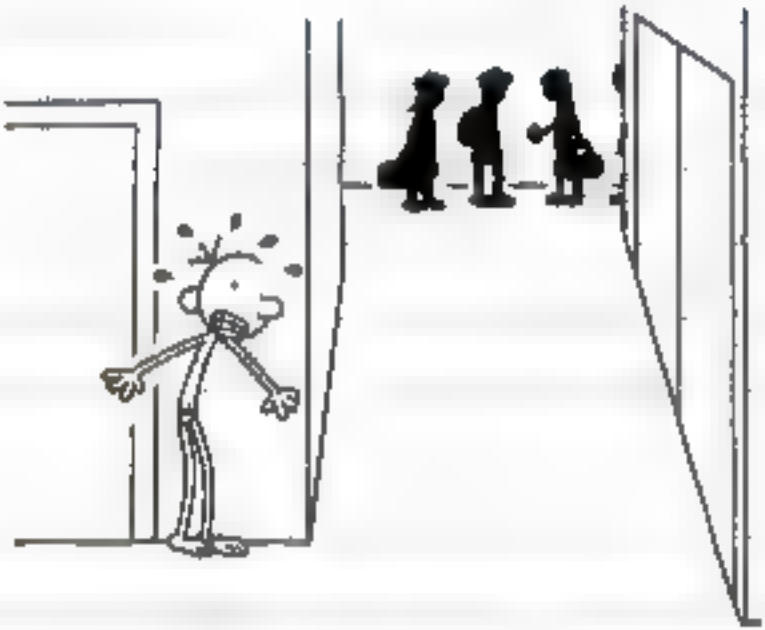
Rodrick took my trail mix, and the next thing I knew, I was locked out of the room in my tighty whities.



I started pounding on the door to make Rodrick let me back in, but all he did was slide a couple of raisins under the door.

So I knew the only way back in the room was to either find Dad or get the key from the front desk. I went to look for Dad, but I had to duck out every time I heard someone coming down the hallway.

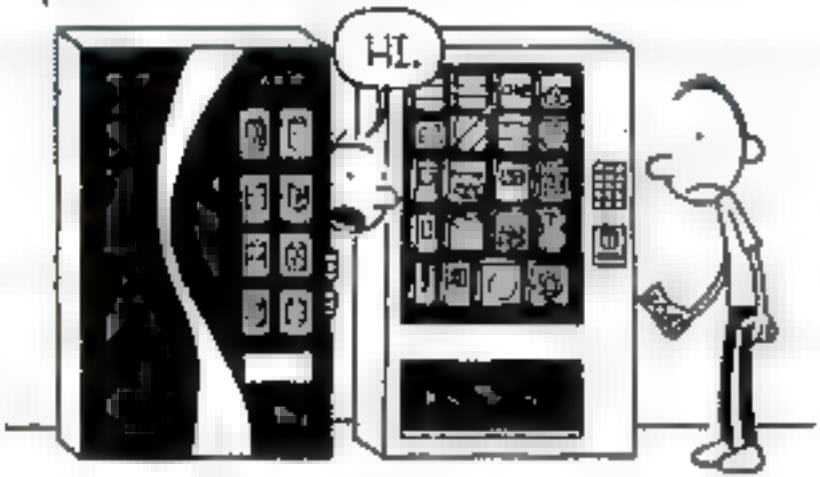
I made it all the way to the elevators, but there were about 50 ten-year-old girls hanging out in the hallway. There must have been a Girl Scout convention going on or something.



I was hoping they'd just go to bed, but they stayed out there gabbing away in the hallway. I didn't have the nerve to walk by them, so I knew I had to choose between staying out in the hallway all night or coming up with another plan.

Dad is chocolate addict, so I knew he'd eventually show up at the vending machines to buy a candy bar. So that's where I camped out.

I had to wait a really long time, but Dad finally showed up.

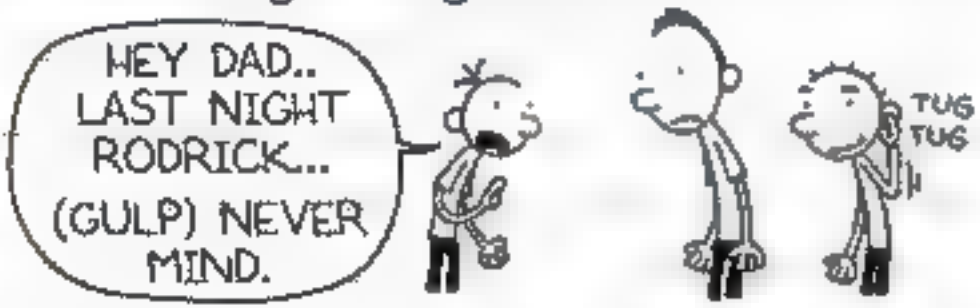


When I saw the look on Dad's face, it kind of made me wish I had just sucked it up and got a key from the front desk instead.

Sunday, May 15th

It was raining again this morning, so we just got in the car and headed home. So my plan to impress Dad this weekend was a bust. In fact, ever since Dad found me hiding between the vending machines last night, he hasn't said a whole lot to me. I'm sure he thinks I'm some kind of a weirdo.

I couldn't tell Dad Rodrick locked me out of the room, because Rodrick would make me pay. Rodrick knows this really embarrassing story about me, and he's always threatening to tell it to everyone if I ever get him in trouble. And whenever I go to tell on him, he gives me this little signal to remind me that he's got the goods on me.

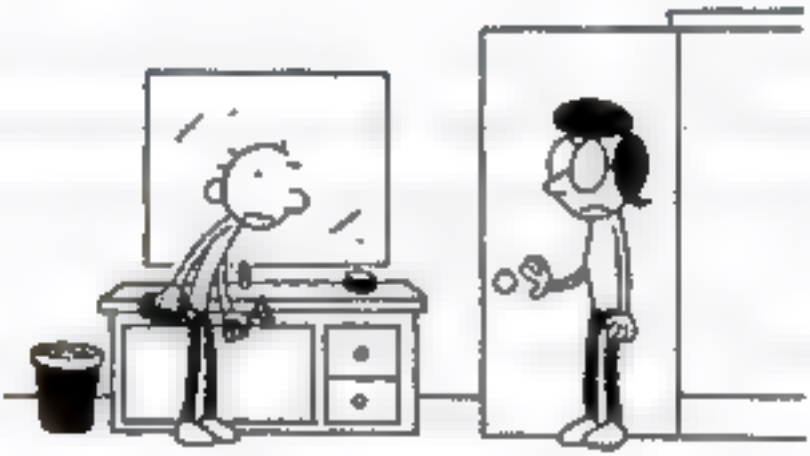


So in case you were ever wondering why I take so much abuse from Rodrick, now you know. Rodrick is one of the only people in the world who knows the thing that happened to me, and believe me, if the story ever got out, I'd have to move out of town.

I've been trying to dig up some good dirt on Rodrick so I can have something to hold over HIS head, but I haven't had any luck. I think I've read through every scrap of paper in his junk drawer, but I can't find anything I can use against him.

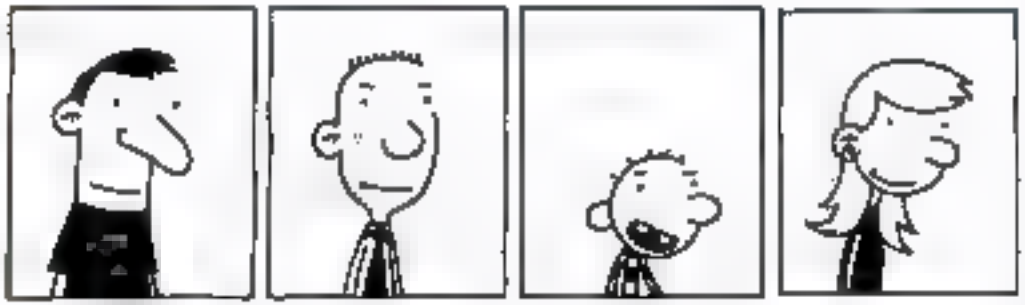
There is one thing I know I could use to embarrass Rodrick, if I could ever find it. And that's his eighth grade yearbook.

The day before school pictures were taken that year, Rodrick had a groaty mustache, and Mom told him to shave it off. But I guess Rodrick got a little carried away in the bathroom, because after he shaved his mustache, he accidentally shaved off one of his eyebrows and I think some of his hair.



Mom wouldn't let Rodrick take his school photo looking like that. So she told Dad to mail in Rodrick's seventh grade picture so they could use it for the yearbook.

The problem is, Dad accidentally sent in the wrong picture. He turned in Rodrick's SECOND grade picture, and believe it or not, it made it in.



Daniel Hatley Bryan Healy Rodrick Heffley Susan Horn

Like I said, I haven't been able to find Rodrick's eighth grade yearbook. I'm sure by now, he's destroyed every copy in existence.

Monday, May 16th

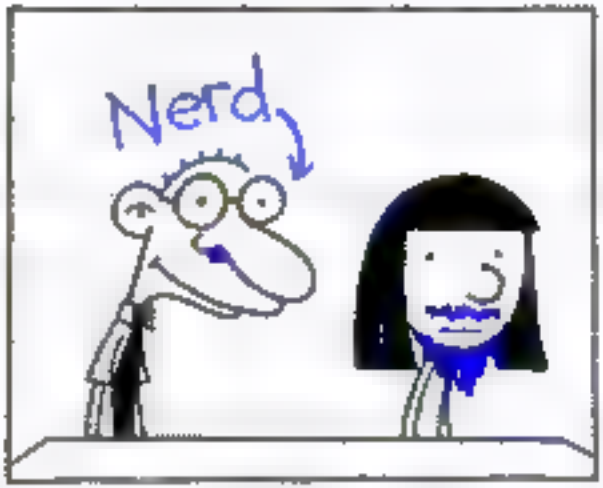
I was poking around in Rodrick's room again today. I couldn't find his eighth grade yearbook, but I did find his yearbook from seventh grade. I've read through that one before.

Rodrick marked up every page with comments about his classmates, so you can tell how he felt about everyone in his grade.

I still see Rodrick's old classmates around from time to time, and I have to say, ever since I found his seventh grade yearbook, church has been a lot more interesting.

Rodrick wrote all over the "Favorites" page, too, where they put pictures of the winners for "Most Popular" and "Most Talented" and all that.

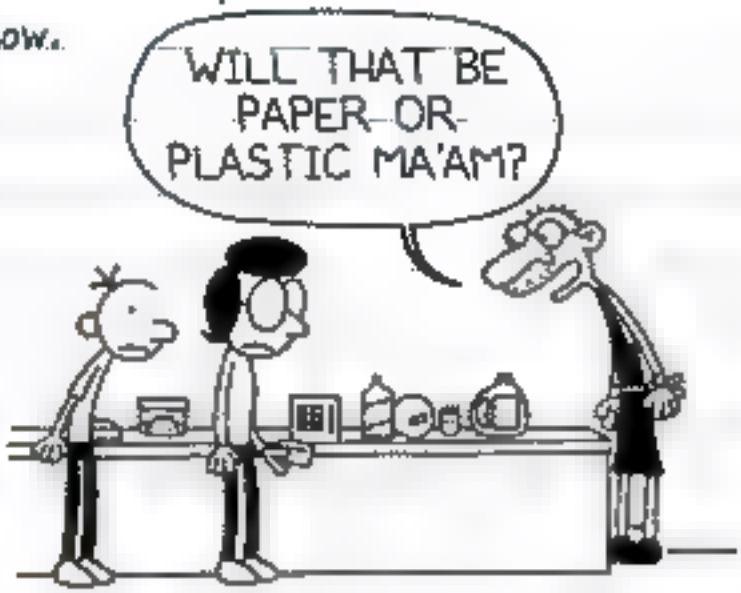
MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED



Bill Watson Kathy Nguyen

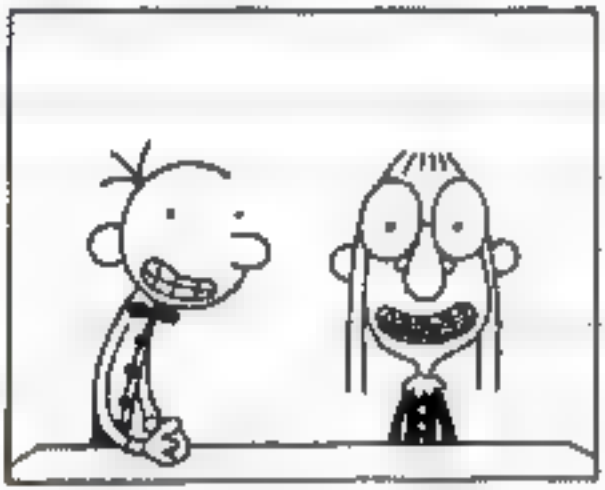
You know, this Favorites page thing has really got me thinking. If you can get voted onto the Favorites page, then you've really accomplished something. Even if you never do anything for the rest of your life, you'll always have a permanent record that proves that you're Somebody.

People in our town still treat Bill Watson like he's some kind of celebrity, even though he dropped out of school two years ago and works at the Food Barn now.



Now that I know I'm going to Spag Union for sure, I want to make my mark before I get sent away. So I've been trying to think of a category on the Favorites page I might have a shot at.

I'm pretty sure Most Popular and Most Athletic are out, so I need to find something that's a little bit more in reach. I thought about dressing up real nice all this week so I can get voted "Best Dressed." But that would mean I'd have to get my picture taken with Janna Pritchard, and she dresses like a Pilgrim.



Tuesday, May 17th

I finally figured out which Favorites category I should go for: Class Clown. It's not like I'm known for being really funny at school or anything. But if I can pull off one big prank right before the voting, my name will be fresh in everybody's mind. I'm thinking a thumbtack on the teacher's chair should do the trick.

I know that joke is a little overdone, but believe me, to the kids in my school, that kind of prank is really sophisticated humor.

Our grade doesn't really have anyone that stands out as the Class Clown, anyway. And if somebody doesn't do something quick, Louis Reamer is going to run away with the title for just being a smart aleck.

I was sitting in Science class today trying to figure out how I was going to sneak a thumbtack onto Mr. Worthingtons seat without getting a detention, but then Mr. Worthington said something that made me rethink my plan.

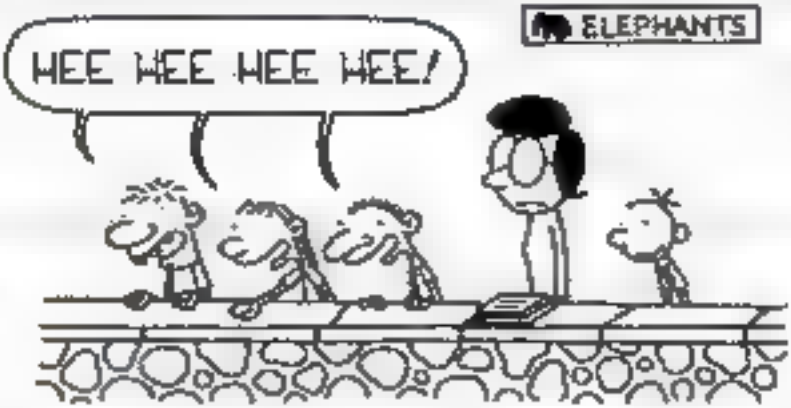
Mr. Worthington has a dentist's appointment tomorrow, so we're going to have a sub. Substitute teachers are like comic gold. You can say just about anything you want, and you won't get in trouble. So I'm definitely going to give Louis Reamer a run for his money tomorrow.

Wednesday, May 18th

I came up with a good idea for a practical joke to pull on the substitute teacher. The idea was that when the sub started writing on the chalkboard, everyone in the class would turn their desks around and face the back of the room. I got a note to everyone in my Science class before 4th period to let them know the plan, and at that point, I figured I pretty much had Class Clown in the bag. But when I walked into the classroom in 4th period, I got a pretty big shocker.

Of all the people in the world to be the substitute teacher today, it had to be Mom. And I couldn't believe she didn't tell me she was subbing.

I thought Mom's days of getting involved at my school were over. She used to be one of those parents who came in to help out in the classroom, but that ended when I was in the 3rd grade. That's the year Mom volunteered to chaperone our trip to the zoo. Before the trip, Mom had put together these lesson plans to help us kids appreciate the different animals. But all anyone was really interested in was watching the animals go to the bathroom.



I guess you could say Mom lost some of her enthusiasm for volunteering after that.

But back to today. It looks like I won't be getting picked Class Clown, because I was the only person in the class who didn't go through with the prank. But on the positive side, I'm guessing it'll be another four years before Mom shows up to help out at my school again.

Thursday, May 19th

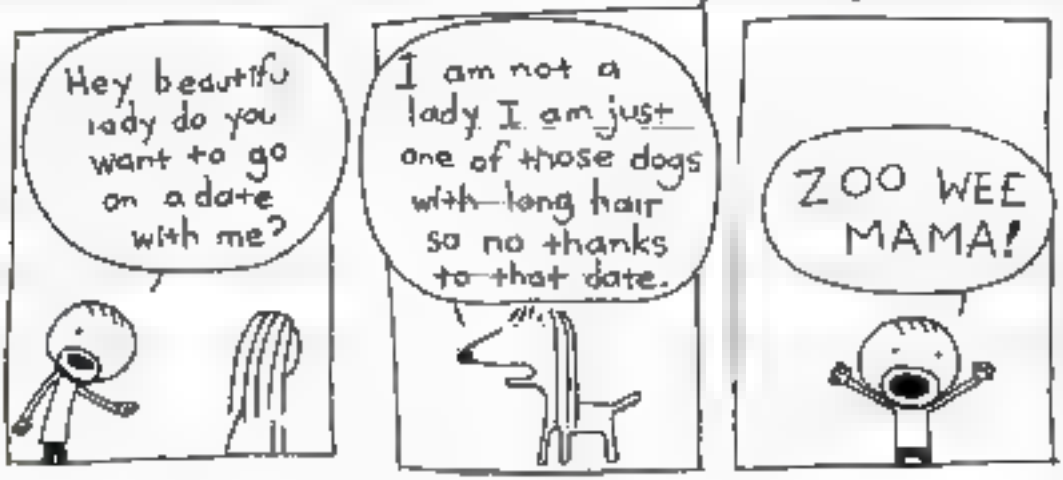
The school paper came out again today. I quit my job as the cartoonist after Creighton the Curious Student got printed, and to be honest with you, I really didn't care who they picked to replace me. So I wasn't even going to read the paper today.

But during lunch, everyone was checking out the new comic and laughing, so I got curious. I grabbed a paper and opened it up, and when I saw the comics page, I just about had a heart attack.

The new comic is "Zoo Wee Mama" by Rowley.

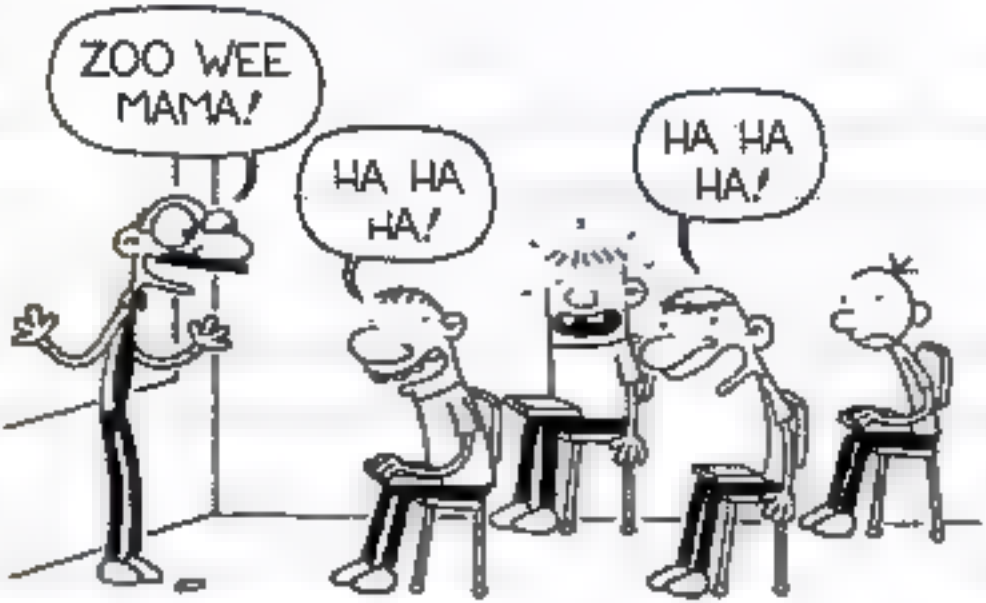
And of course Mr. Winsky didn't change a single word of Rowley's strip.

Zoo Wee Mama by Rowley Jefferson



Now Rowley's getting all the fame that I was supposed to be getting.

Even the teachers are kissing Rowley's butt. I just about lost my lunch when Mr. Worthington dropped his chalk in Science class.

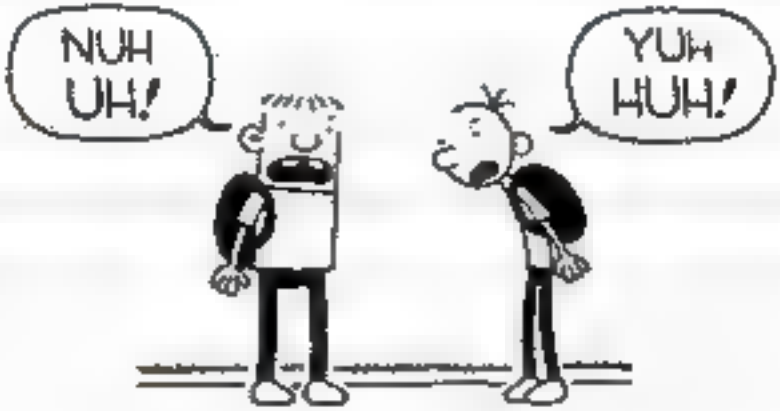


I'm telling you, at this point, the end of the school year can't come quick enough for me.

Friday, May 20th

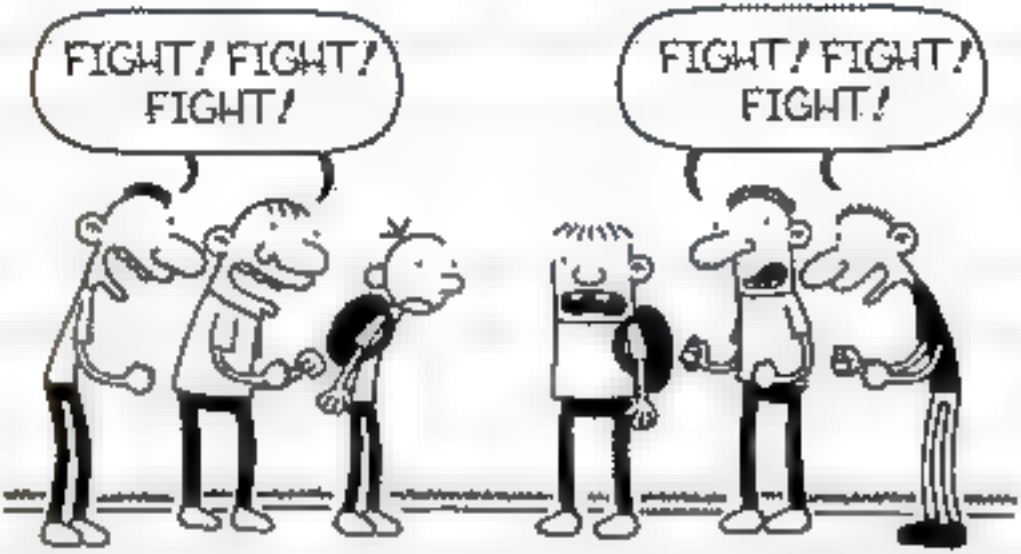
You know, Rowley has really been getting on my nerves lately. Just about everything he does annoys me. I'm starting to wonder why I ever became friends with him in the first place.

Today, we were walking home from school, talking about the new unit in Gym, which is volleyball. Only Rowley pronounces it "bolleyball," with a B. I tried to tell Rowley the word starts with a V, but he didn't want to hear it.



See what I mean? And I get into these idiotic debates with Rowley just about every day.

Usually, I just get annoyed with Rowley, and that's the end of it. But today was different. I guess we must have been arguing a little too loud, because the next thing you knew, we attracted a crowd.



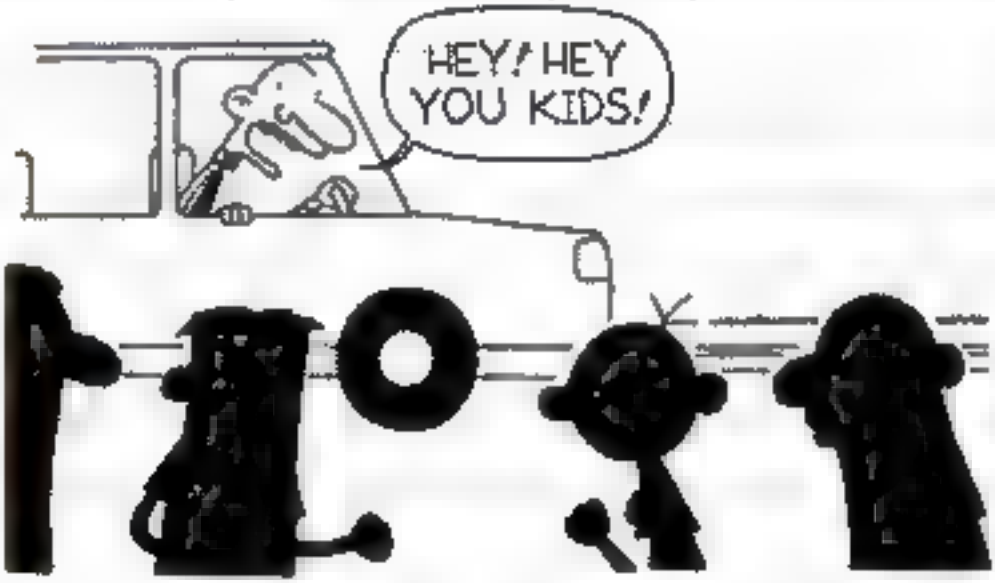
The kids at my school are always itching for a good fight. I was happy to just walk away and let Rowley think whatever he wants to think, but you could tell the mob wasn't going to be satisfied until they saw some punches thrown.

There was no getting out of it, so me and Rowley struck up some fighting poses. I've never been in a real fight before, so I didn't know how I was supposed to stand or hold my fists or anything. And you could tell Rowley didn't know what he was doing, either, because he was prancing around like a leprechaun.

I'm pretty sure I could take Rowley in a fight, but the thing that made me nervous was the whole karate issue. I don't know what kind of hocus pocus they teach in Rowley's karate classes, and the last thing I needed was to get dropped by some ridiculous roundhouse kick I didn't even see coming.

And you could tell Rowley was nervous, too. At his karate school they teach you not to use your skills unless it's under the most "extreme circumstances." So I'm sure Rowley was trying to work out whether or not a spelling disagreement fell into that category.

So me and Rowley just circled each other for a while, waiting for the other guy to bust a move. But right when it looked like one of us was going to have to throw a punch, an adult pulled up in a car.



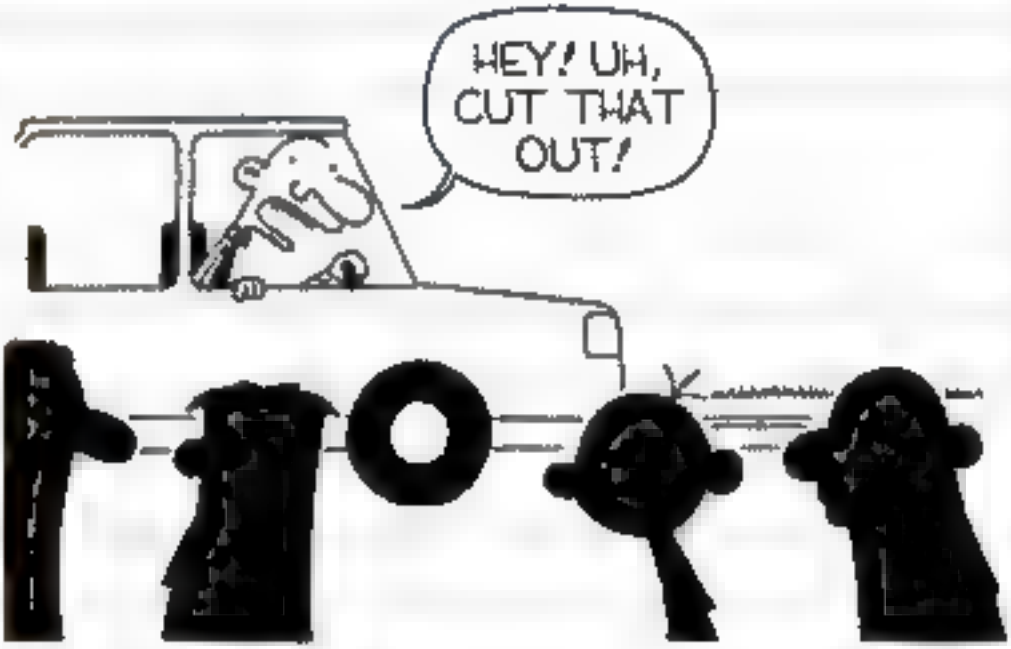
When that happened, I was thinking, Hallelujah. And you could tell Rowley was relieved someone stepped in to stop the fight, too.

But it turns out the grown-up didn't pull over to stop the fight. He was just lost and needed directions.

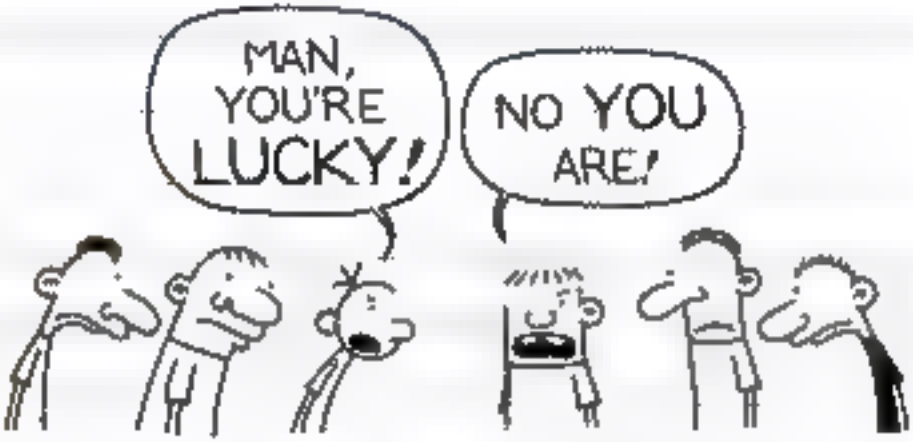
It took everyone a second to realize that the guy wasn't going to do anything to stop the fight, and that meant the fight was back on.

So me and Rowley had to get back into our fighting poses.

Finally, the guy in the car figured out what was going on, and he spoke up.



Well, that was all me and Rowley needed to hear. We broke it up on the spot.

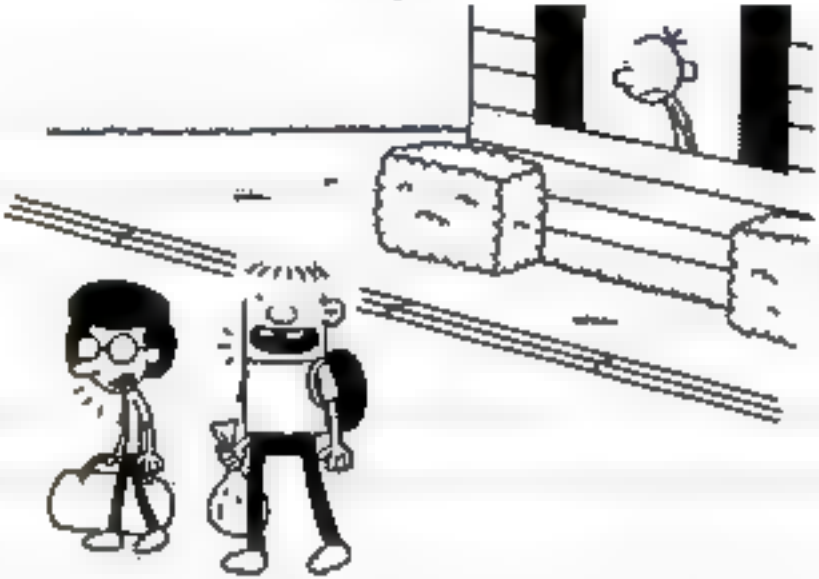


I guess the crowd was pretty disappointed, because they were hoping to see blood. I was just happy to walk out of the situation without getting a knee to the groin.

I guess this means me and Rowley are now ex-friends, but to be honest with you, it was headed that way anyway.

Saturday, May 21st

After dinner tonight, I looked out my window and saw Rowley and Collin headed up the hill, chumming around like they were best friends.



It really ticked me off, for a bunch of reasons. First of all, Collin was carrying his duffle bag, which meant he was going to Rowley's to spend the night. Me and Rowley were supposed to do a sleepover at his house this weekend, and a couple days ago I even bought a bunch of candy for us to pig out on.

But then we got in that fight yesterday, and the plan went out the window.

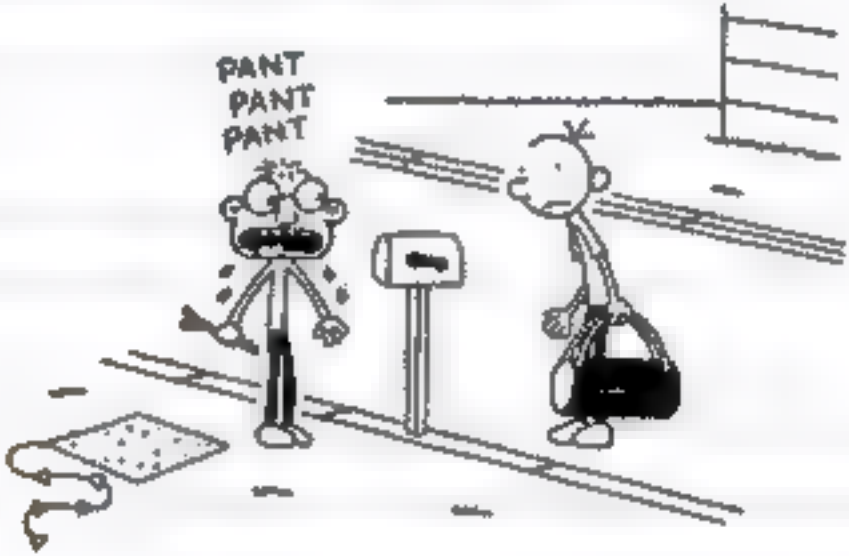
The thing that really stinks is that I was planning on using Collin as MY backup friend, but Rowley beat me to the punch.

Well, two can play at that game. I figured the best way to get back at Rowley was to get a new friend of my own. And unfortunately, the only person that came to mind right at that moment was Fregly.

Here's the plan I came up with: I would wait until I saw Rowley out in his front yard, and then I'd walk up to Fregly's with my overnight bag and make sure Rowley could see that I had other friend options, too.

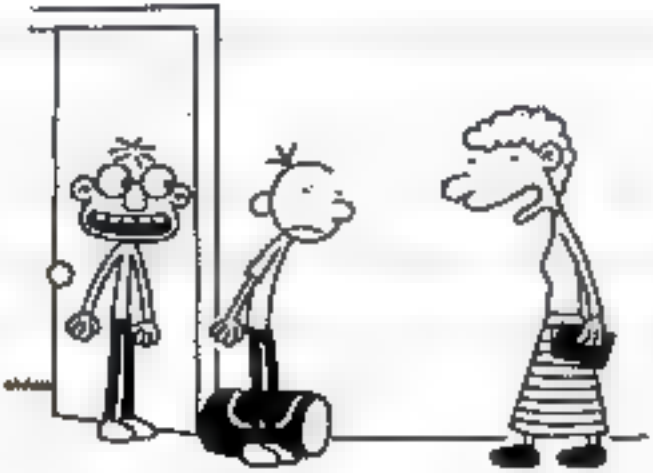
Then, when Rowley went back inside, I'd just go back home.

When I got to Fregly's house, he was outside in his front yard stabbing a kite with a stick. I had to wait for him to finish up before I could get his attention.



If I had any common sense, I would have just turned around and headed home right then and there. But I noticed Rowley was watching me from his front yard, so there was no turning back.

I invited myself in Fregly's house. His mom said that she was excited to see Fregly with a "play-mate", which was a term I was not too enthusiastic about.



Me and Fregly went up to his room. Fregly was trying to get me to play Twister, so I made sure to stay 10 feet away from him at all times. I looked out the window to see if Rowley was back in his house so I could make my escape. But Rowley and Collin were outside playing flashlight tag, and it didn't look like they were going inside any time soon. When I turned back around, Fregly was acting really strange.

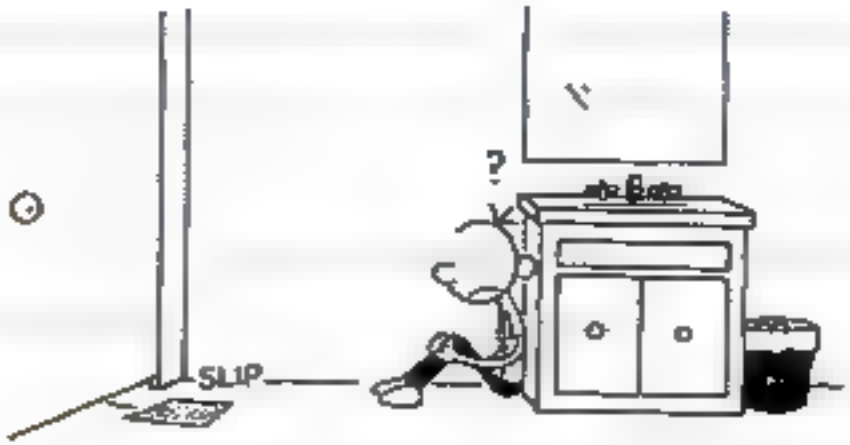
He had gotten into one of my bags of candy and went to town. I remembered back from preschool that Fregly isn't allowed to have anything with sugar in it, so this was a major problem.

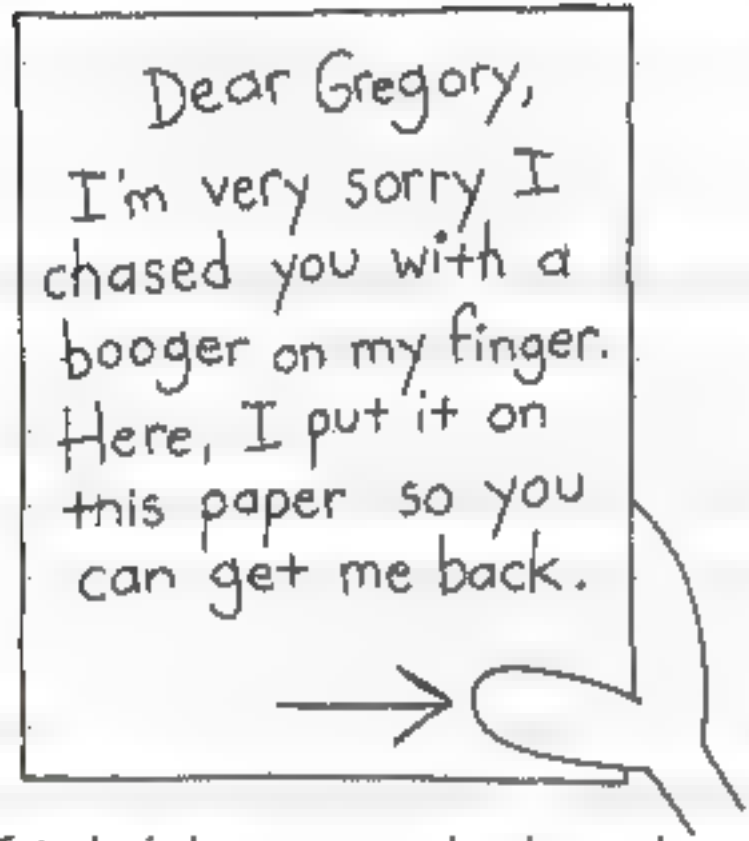
I would have just left right then and there, but Fregly started chasing me around the upstairs like a complete weirdo. I had to lock myself in the bathroom, and that's where I've been for the past hour and a half. All I can do at this point is wait for Fregly to wear himself out so I can make a run for it.

Sunday, May 22nd

It took Fregly almost three hours to come down off his sugar high last night. He was running up and down the hallway like a lunatic until he finally crashed around 11:00. I didn't want to risk coming out of the bathroom and getting ambushed, so I decided to just wait until I was sure he was asleep.

It got real quiet in the house, and I was thinking about peeking out into the hallway to see if the coast was clear. But right when I was about to get up, someone slipped a note under the door.



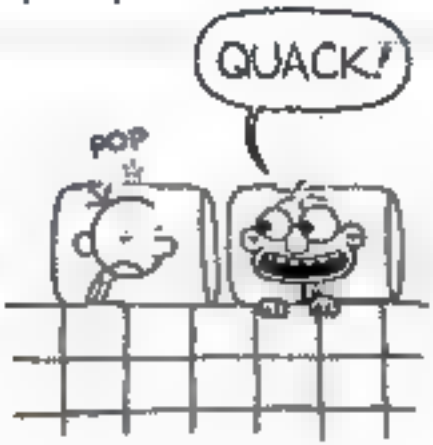


When I looked down at my thumb, my knees got weak and everything started to go black.

I must have fainted right there on the bathroom floor. I don't even know how long I was out.

All I know is that when I woke up, I was in Fregly's bed. The best I can figure is that Fregly's mom found me on the bathroom floor and thought I was asleep, so she carried me to bed.

That's the only way I can explain how I got there.



I must have set a world's record for speed leaving Fregly's house.

I was locked out of my house, so I had to wake Mom and Dad up to let me back in.

Dad wasn't real happy when he showed up at the front door. But trust me, at that point, I really didn't care.

Monday, May 23rd

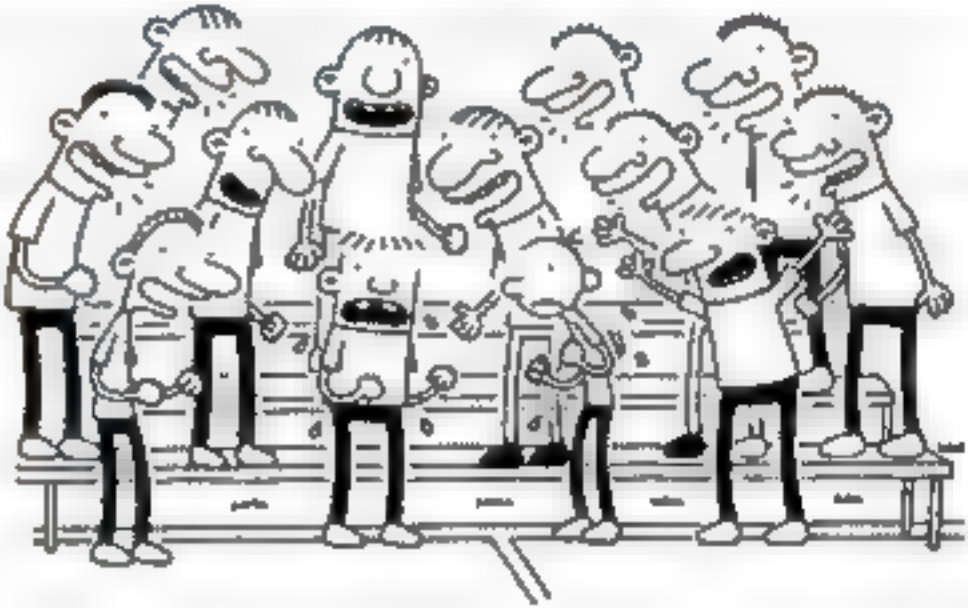
This morning, everyone was buzzing about a big fight that was supposed to happen after school. When I asked someone who was fighting, I got a shock: it was me and Rowley. Those guys who witnessed our "fight" last week weren't happy that it got cut off, and I guess they decided we should pick up where we left off on the basketball courts this afternoon.

It seems like every guy in the school knew about the fight. Kids who didn't know my first name three days ago were all of the sudden talking about how much I weigh and what my reach is.

I wasn't crazy about the idea of getting into a fistfight, but that doesn't mean I wouldn't welcome the chance to slug Rowley. Rowley and Collin showed up at school today wearing matching friendship bracelets, and believe me, the thought of punching Rowley in the stomach definitely crossed my mind.

But if I was going to settle things with Rowley, I wanted it to be in private. I didn't like the idea of fighting in front of a big mob, but I knew there was no way out of it.

After the last bell rang at 3:00, a swarm of guys practically carried me and Rowley out onto the basketball courts. Rowley seemed to be just as enthusiastic about this fight as me. But I think we both knew we should just hurry up and get it over with so we could go home.

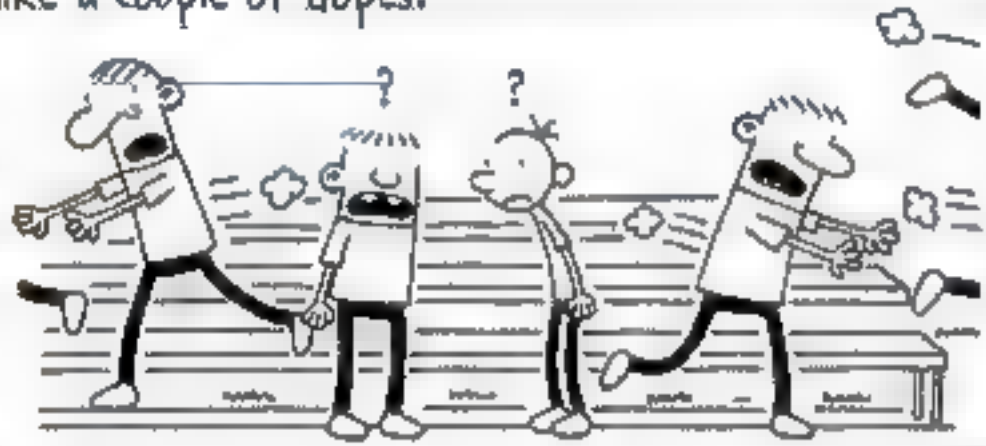


But before anyone threw a punch, there was a loud rumbling sound off in the distance. Everybody looked around to see where it was coming from.

The noise was coming from the woods. Some kids were riding on dirtbikes, coming our way.

I didn't really care who it was on the dirtbikes. I was just relieved that everyone's attention was on something other than me and Rowley. But all the other guys took off as soon as the dirtbikes got close.

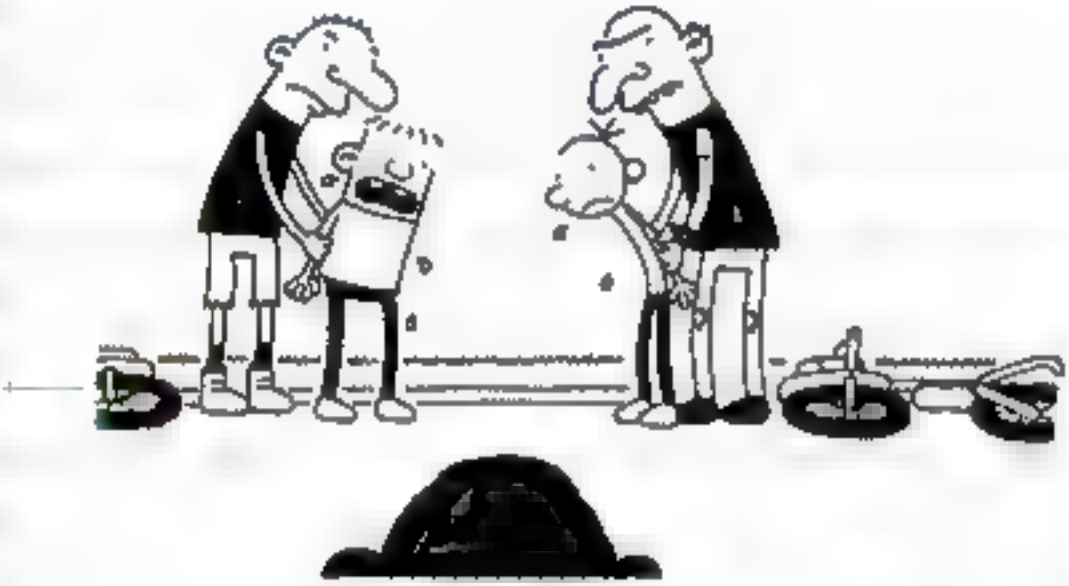
And while everyone else was running for their lives, me and Rowley were just standing there like a couple of dopes.



The reason everybody cleared out was because the guys on the dirtbikes were Herbie Reamer and his goons. THE Herbie Reamer, the nastiest bully in the whole state.

I had never seen Herbie Reamer for real, but I had heard all the stories about him. And let me tell you, I was not too thrilled to be meeting him in person.

Herbie and his thugs drove their dirtbikes right up to us, and before you knew it, me and Rowley had our arms pinned behind our backs.



Herbie broke into this speech about how after three o'clock, the basketball courts were his turf. I wanted to tell him that he could have the whole school for all I cared, but he didn't seem like the kind of guy that likes to get interrupted.

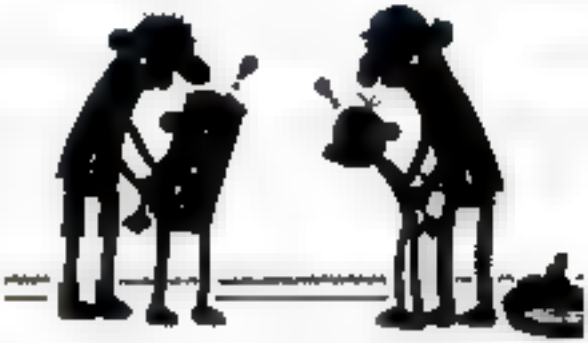
Herbie said he was going to teach us a lesson for trespassing. The whole time Herbie was talking, I kept looking over at the Cheese, which was only a few feet from where he was standing.

The Cheese was looking worse than ever. It's been on the blacktop for almost two years now, and it just keeps looking more disgusting.

I almost told Herbie to watch his step as a courtesy.

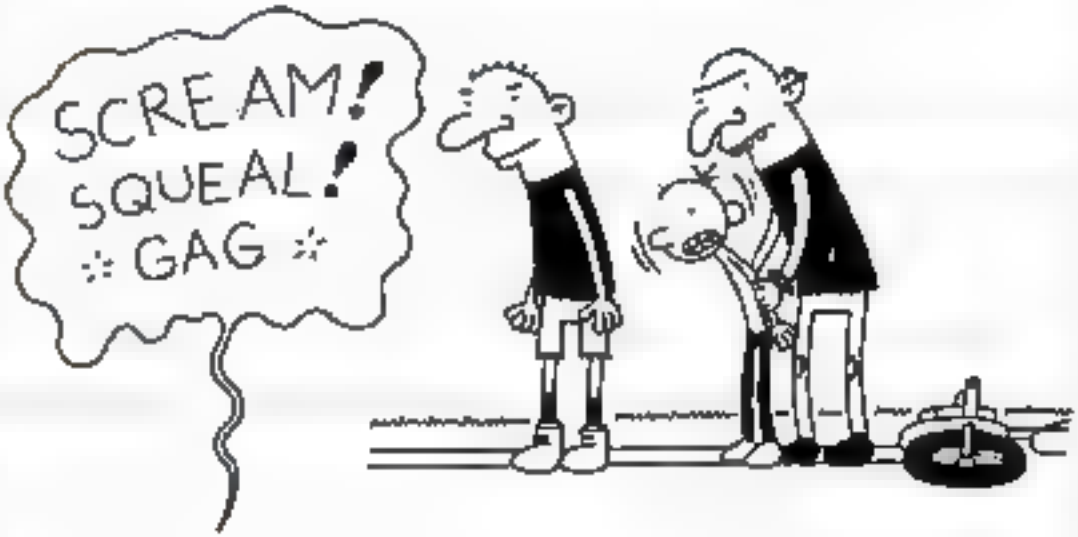
I guess Herbie must have caught my eye, because all of the sudden, his attention was on the Cheese, too.

I almost don't want to say the punishment Herbie came up with, because it's too awful to put down in writing. Let's just say Herbie's idea made you appreciate how he got such a nasty reputation in the first place.



Luckily, Rowley was standing closer to Herbie, so he got singled out first. Herbie grabbed Rowley and dragged him over to the Cheese.

Now, I don't want to come right out and say what happened next, because if Rowley ever tries to run for president, and someone finds out what Herbie Reamer made him do, he'll be finished.



So I'll say it like this: Herbie made Rowley ——— the Cheese.

Or at least half of it. Herbie saved the rest for me. I knew I wasn't going to be able to fight my way out of this situation, so I tried talking.

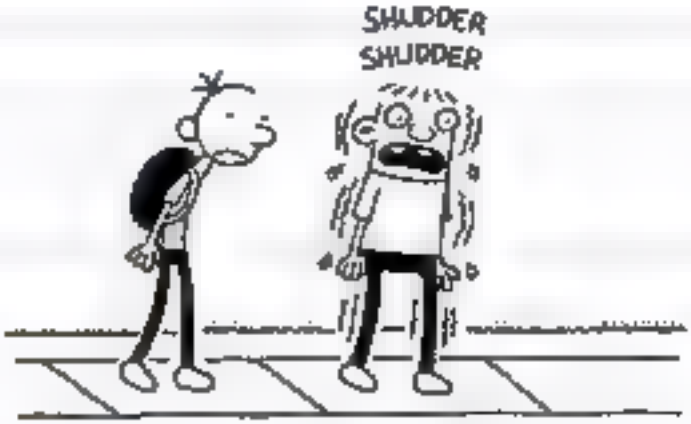
So when Herbie tried to make me do what Rowley did, here's what I told him:

And believe it or not, it worked.

Herbie let me off the hook, and he made Rowley finish off the other half of the Cheese.

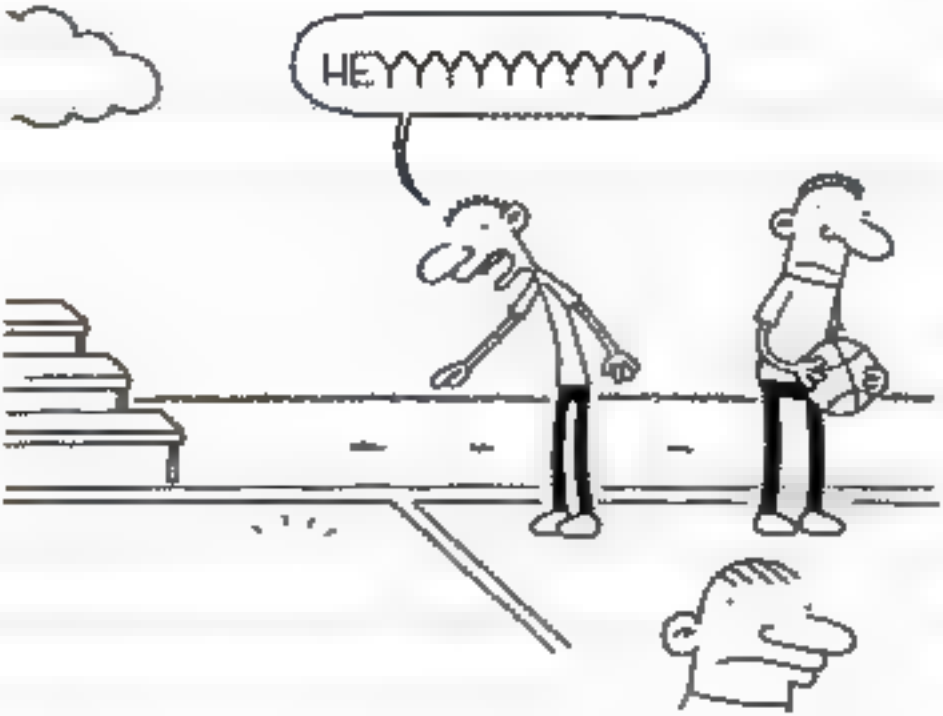
I figure it was no big deal to Rowley, because he had already crossed that bridge.

On the way home, Rowley wasn't saying a whole lot, and I didn't really know what I was supposed to say to him. I thought about mentioning that maybe next time he should have pulled out a few of his karate moves, but something told me I should just let it go.



Tuesday, May 24th

Things were going OK at school today until they let us out for recess. It took about thirty seconds for someone to realize the Cheese was missing from its spot on the basketball court.



Everybody crowded around to look at where the Cheese used to be. People couldn't believe it was actually gone.

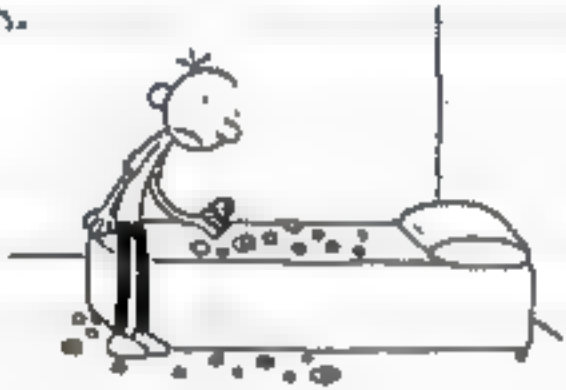
Everybody started coming up with theories about what happened to it. The craziest idea I heard was that the Cheese actually grew legs and walked away. It took all my self control to bite my tongue. If Rowley wasn't there, I honestly don't know if I could have kept my mouth shut.

But I did. As big of a jerk as Rowley has been the past couple weeks, I figured he's suffered enough already without everyone finding out what really happened. So I'll go to my grave without ever telling anyone Rowley ate the _____.

Wednesday, May 25th

It's starting to look like the whole Cheese incident is going to just blow over, which is good. But wouldn't you know it? Right when I was starting to relax a little, something else cropped up.

When I went up to my room tonight, there was a pile of ripped-up paper on my bed. It took me a minute to piece it together and figure out what it was, and once I did, I got a sick feeling in my stomach.



The little pieces of paper were what was left of an English assignment I'm supposed to turn in tomorrow.

Our year-end assignment is to write an "allegory," which is basically a story about one thing that's really about something else. I was having trouble getting inspired, but after dinner, I came up with a good idea.

Rory Screws Up

by Greg Heffley

Once there was this monkey named Rory. The family he lived with loved him very much, even though he was constantly screwing things up.

Well one day Rory accidentally rang the doorbell, and everybody thought he did it on purpose. So they gave him some bananas as a reward.

So now Rory was going around thinking he was some sort of monkey genius. And this one day he heard his owner say

I guess the doorbell thing must have went to Rory's head, because he actually thought he could help out.

Rory's primitive mind raced to formulate a plan. And here is what he eventually came up with.

So he worked all day and all night, and to make a long story short, the end result was not a fixed car

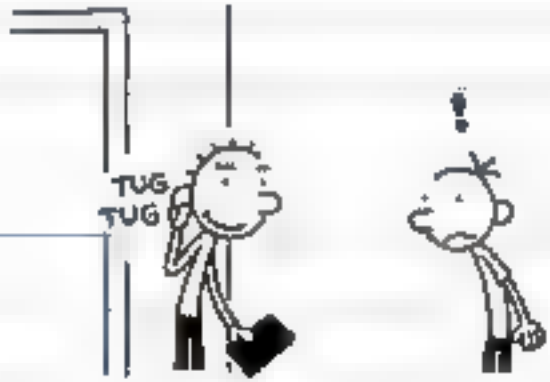
After it was all over, Rory had learned a valuable lesson. Rory is a monkey. And monkeys don't fix cars.

After I finished my paper, I showed it to Rodrick, because I knew he wouldn't get it. And I was right.

But I guess Rodrick must have figured it out since then. And now I'm sweating bullets, because I know he's not going to just let me off with a ripped-up assignment.

Thursday, May 26th

Man, I should have known better than to go and provoke Rodrick yesterday. Even though that English assignment was just a harmless prank, Rodrick used it as an excuse to wage all-out war on me tonight. After dinner, Rodrick went down to his room and spent about an hour on the phone. And when he came back upstairs, I realized what he had been up to.



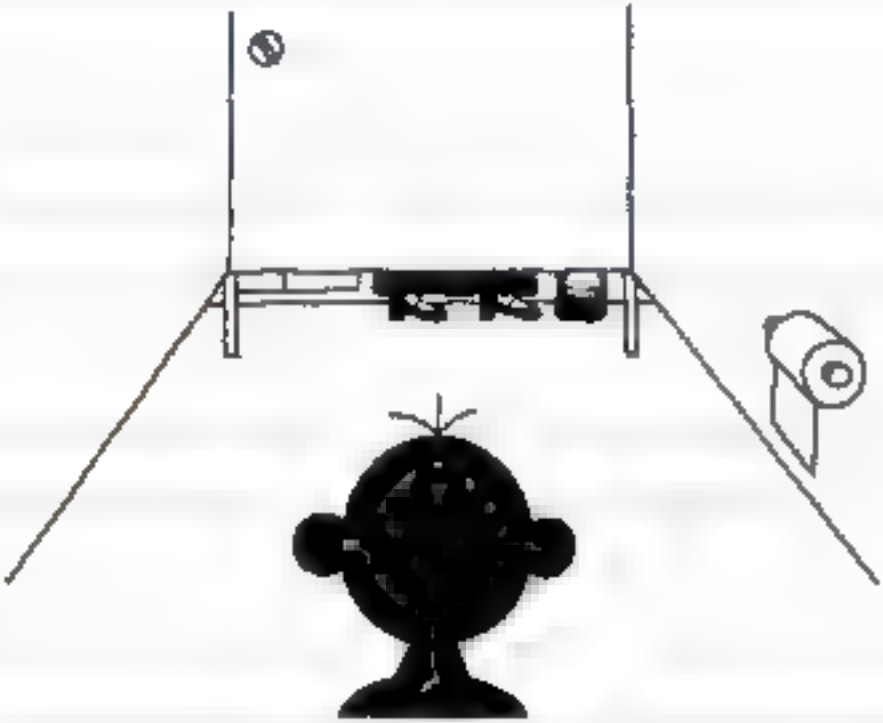
Remember how I told you Rodrick knows the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to me? Well, Rodrick went and told it to everyone he knows.

Rodrick called up all his friends and told them the story, and a lot of them have younger brothers and sisters who go to my school. So by tomorrow, the whole world will know what happened to me.

And I'm sure Rodrick exaggerated the details of the story to make me look even worse. So now that the story is out there, I want to put on record what REALLY happened, not Rodrick's twisted version. So here it goes:

Last year, me and Rodrick went to Grampa's condominium to drop off some chairs. On the way out, I had to use the bathroom, so I used the one in the lobby of the building.

But as soon as I sat down, someone else came in the bathroom, and I could see under the stall door that it was a woman.



I thought about saying something to let this lady know she was in the wrong bathroom, but right then, someone else walked in. And guess what? It was ANOTHER woman.

And then it hit me: I was in the WOMEN's bathroom.

I just prayed that the two ladies would wash their hands and walk out so I could make a run for it. But it didn't go down that way. Both of them sat down in the stalls to the left and right of me.

I just tried to sit completely still and not make a sound and wait for them to leave. But every time one lady would leave the bathroom, another one would come in and take her place.

It was the worst experience of my life. All I can say is, if Rowley thinks he was traumatized by the Cheese incident, he should try spending 45 minutes trapped in the women's bathroom at Leisure World.

I guess someone must have realized there was a boy in one of the stalls, because eventually, Security came in to remove me. And unfortunately, Rodrick had a front-row seat to the whole miserable situation.

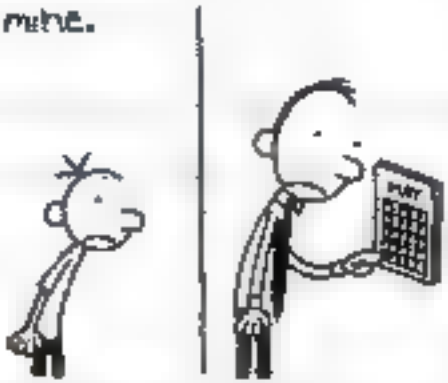
Now that the story is out, I'm thinking maybe it's not such a bad thing that I'm getting sent off to military academy in another state. I don't need to spend the next five years being known as the Bathroom Boy.

I figured it would be best if I just skip the last few days of school, but Mom wouldn't let me.

I had to tell Mom the whole story so she would understand the reason I needed to stay home. But Mom said I shouldn't worry because my classmates would understand that I had just made an "honest mistake." And that just proves once and for all that she doesn't know a thing about kids my age.

Dad wasn't any help, either. For the past couple of weeks, he's been totally depressed because the Smedley kid's half-birthday party is coming up at the end of the month, and he hasn't thought of a way out of going yet.

So he's too busy thinking about his own problems to hear about mine.

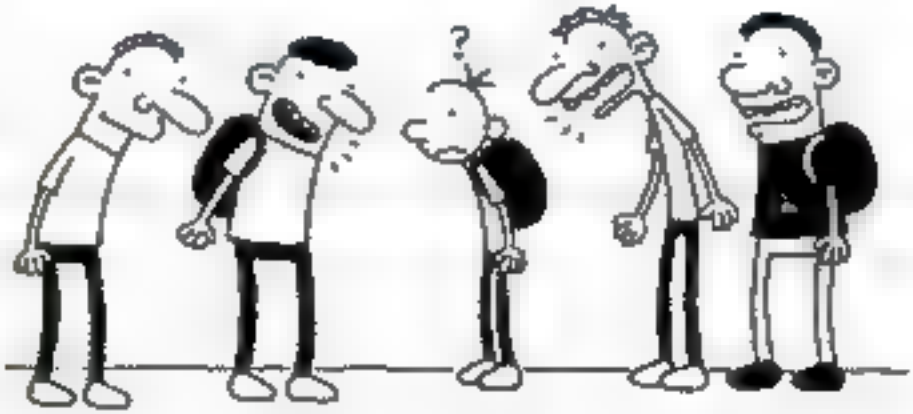


I'm just bracing myself for tomorrow morning. Hopefully a meteor will hit my school in the middle of the night so I don't have to deal with the grief that's coming my way.

Friday, May 27th

When I woke up today, I was really dreading the idea of facing my classmates. But I knew there was no way of getting out of it. So I walked into school and braced myself for the harassment to start.

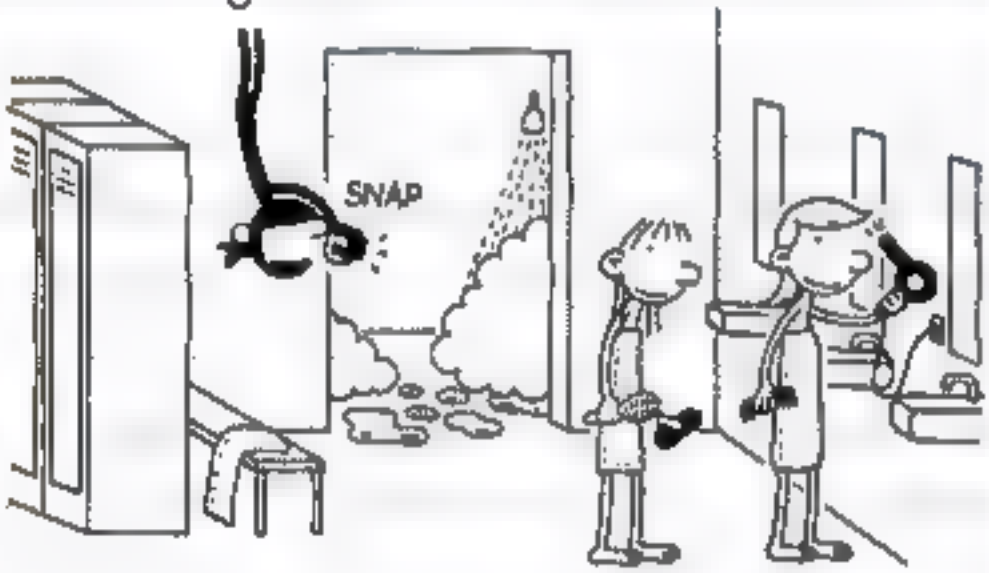
As soon as I set foot in the door, sure enough, a bunch of guys cornered me. But here's the crazy thing. Instead of teasing me, they started CONGRATULATING me.



Everyone was shaking my hand and patting me on the back, and I couldn't figure out what was going on.

After hearing what everyone was saying, I started to understand what must have happened. The story Rodrick told his friends got passed on to their brothers and sisters, and then they told their friends. But by the time the story got spread around, all the details got totally messed up.

So the story changed from me accidentally walking into a women's bathroom at Leisure World to me purposefully infiltrating a girl's locker room at Crossland High School.



I couldn't believe the story got twisted like that. And I wasn't about to set the record straight, either. So all of the sudden, I was a hero at school. I even got a nickname. People were calling me the "Stealthinator."

Someone even made me a headband that said Stealthinator on it, and you better believe I wore it. There was no way I was going to pass up my moment of glory.

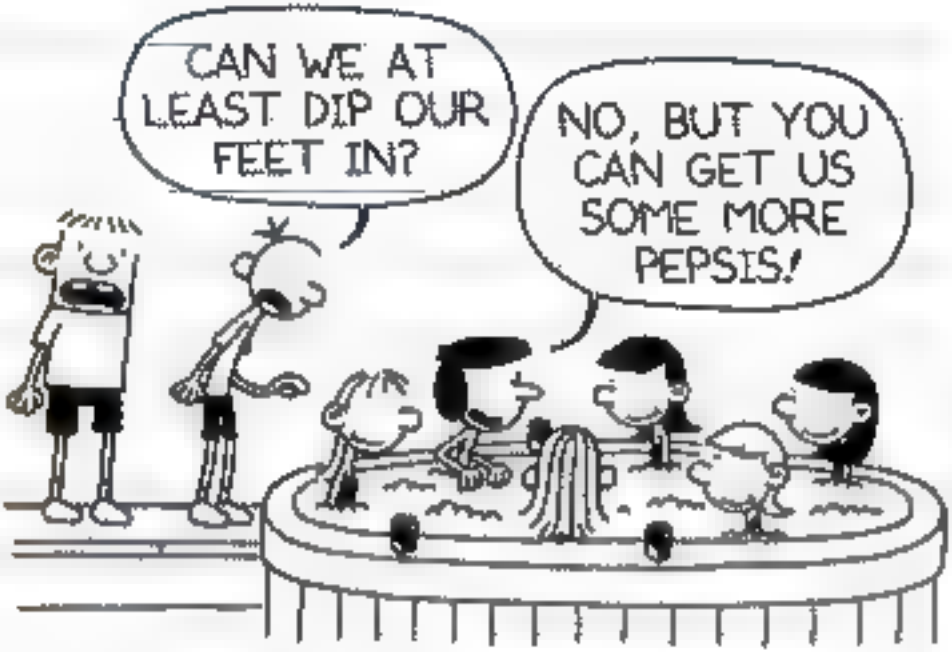
This means that when I get sent to Spag Union, I'll leave behind a legacy at my school. And I can live with that.

The only downside was that the girls weren't as impressed with the story as the guys were.

But like they say, I guess you can't win them all.

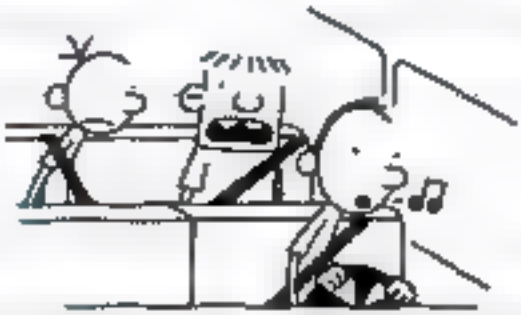
Saturday, May 28th

You remember Chirag? Well, he had an end-of-the-year party at his house today, and me and Rowley were invited. Chirag and his family are moving in a few days, and this time it looks like it's for real. I still feel a little bad about how we treated Chirag before, but he got the last laugh today. Chirag has a hot tub, but he only wrote "Bring a Bathing Suit" on the girls' invitations. I have to tip my hat to him on that one.



Dad picked me and Rowley up after the party.

Dad is all cheery again for some reason, which is weird. Because as far as I know, Mom's still making him go to the Smedley half-birthday party on Tuesday.



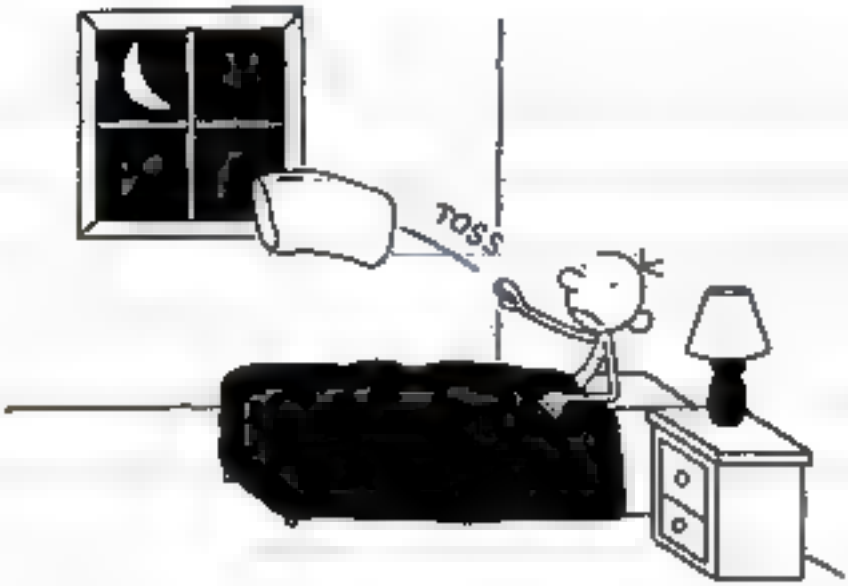
You know, if there's anyone who should be depressed over that stupid party, it's me. Monday is my last day of school, and Tuesday should've been my one day of freedom before Dad drives me up to Spag Union. But instead of relaxing and doing whatever I want, I'm going to be choking down deviled eggs at some ugly baby's party.

Sunday, May 29th

Today I was in my room minding my own business when Dad stormed in, all worked up over something. He started waving this envelope in my face, asking me why I didn't turn it in at school like he asked me to. I told him he must be confused, because he never gave me any envelope. But Dad said he handed me the envelope on Thursday night and told me it was very very important that I turn it in the next day. And to be honest with you, that part did sound a little familiar.

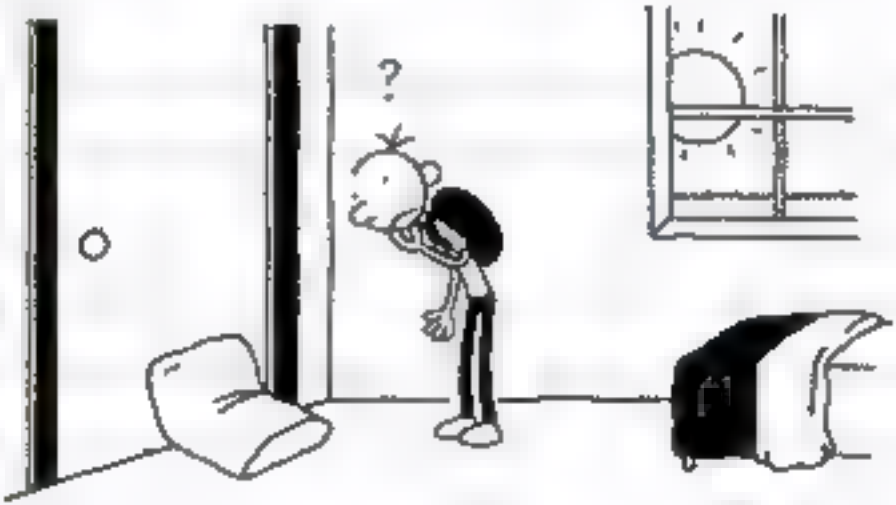
If I did forget to do what Dad asked me to do, it definitely wasn't my fault. I have the perfect system for remembering stuff like that.

I'll give you an example. Let's say it's the middle of the night, and I remember that there's something important I'm supposed to do the next day. Well, I don't want to have to get out of bed and write myself a note, so I'll just chuck my pillow at my bedroom door.



And then when I get ready to walk out my door the next morning, I'll say to myself, now what the heck is that pillow doing on the floor?

And then I'll say, oh yeah, I have to bring in my permission slip for the field trip I'm going on today.

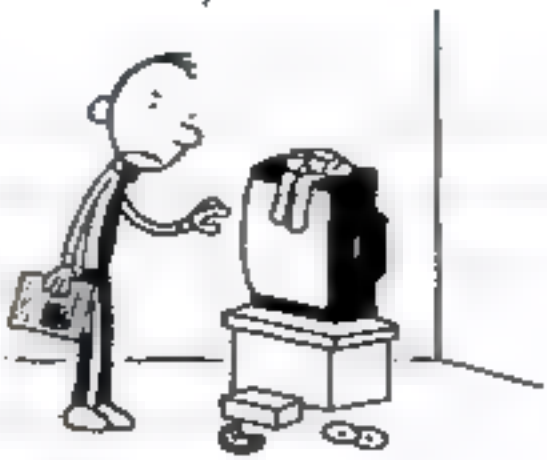


See what I mean? It's pretty much a foolproof system, and it saves a lot of Post-It Notes.

Now that I think about it, I DID set up a reminder to turn in Dad's stupid envelope.

When Dad told me how important that envelope was, I specifically remember putting my socks and shoes on top of the t.v. so I wouldn't forget to turn it in.

And if Dad did something to interfere with my system, then he's only got himself to blame.

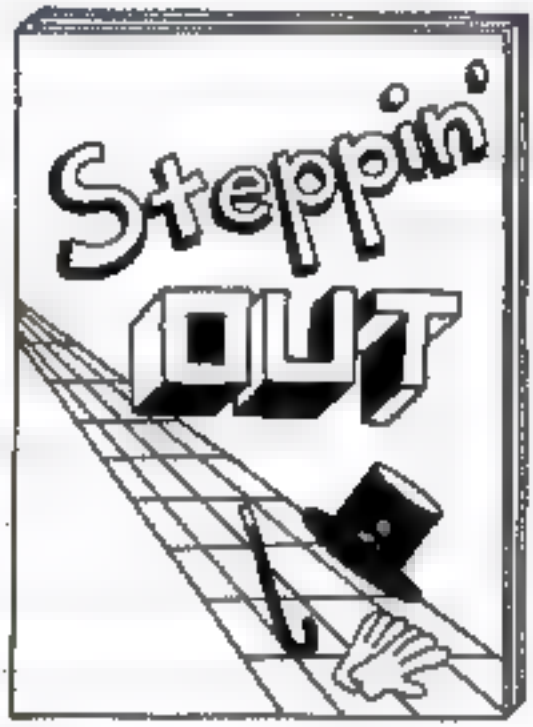


Monday, May 30th

Today was the last day of school before summer, so things were totally out of control. Most teachers knew there was no way they were going to teach us anything today, so they just let us run wild.

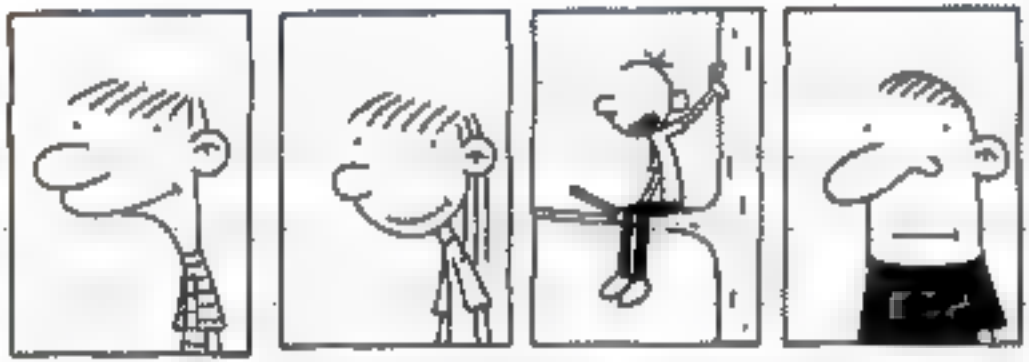
But Mr. Peters actually held his final exam today. Before the test even started, the whole class got into a monster paper fight, which in hindsight was pretty idiotic, considering the final exam was open-notebook.

The only reason I even showed up today was to pick up my copy of the yearbook, which they handed out at lunch.



I flipped through and found my picture. And as soon as I saw it, I wished I had just stayed home today.

This was the first year they let us choose the way we had our picture taken, like "Classic Portrait" and "Casual." And I was the only kid in the whole school who picked "Natural Setting."



Hatley, Blake Hederer, Erin Heffley, Gregory Herd, Damion

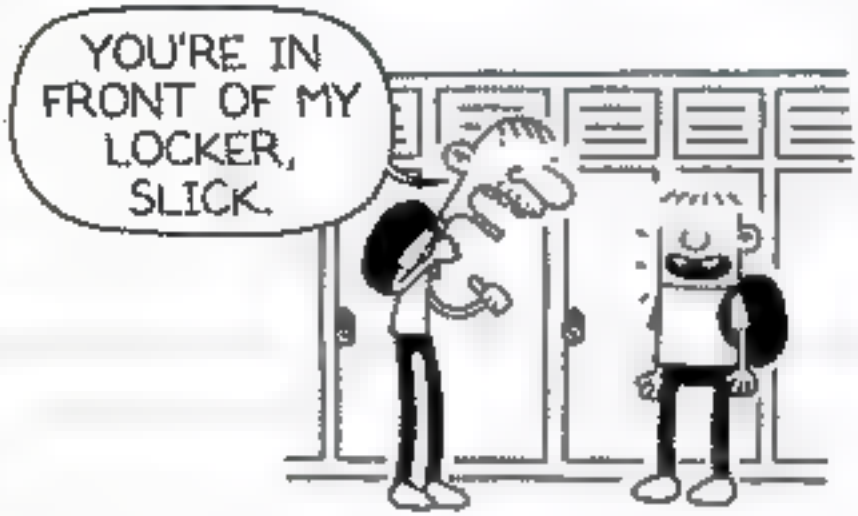
Mom was the one who talked me into picking that pose to begin with, so I blame her.

At lunch, everyone was just passing their yearbooks around to get their friends to sign them. When I got my yearbook back, here's what was on the last page:

Don't be a fool
Be cool

Slick

I couldn't figure out who "Slick" was, but then I realized it was Rowley. He had a run-in with an 8th grader this morning, and I guess now he thinks he has a permanent nickname.



But if Rowley thinks I'm calling him that, he's out of his mind.

I was looking through the other signatures and realized I made a big mistake by handing my yearbook to every random dork in the cafeteria. So I decided that from that point on, the only people who were going to sign my yearbook were girls. The only problem was that most of the girls were still pretty steamed about the whole Stealthinator thing, and it was hard to get any of them to sign. But I DID get Andrea Trotter to sign, and she's the 4th prettiest girl in my whole grade. And here's what she put:

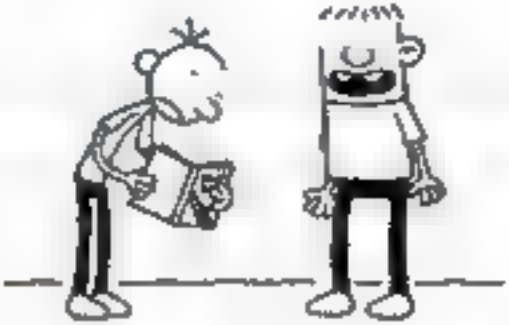
Greg-
I didn't really get to know
you that wel but you seem
OK I guess
K.I.T.
Andrea

My eyes lit up as soon as I saw that K.I.T. thing. Because any fool can tell you K.I.T. means "Keep In Touch." And trust me, I planned to take Andrea up on her offer.

I brought my yearbook over to Rowley to brag about what Andrea wrote. But then he showed me his yearbook, and it kind of took the wind out of my sails.

Dear Rowley-
You are so adorable & funny! I hope we are in the same homeroom next year! I'll see you at the pool this summer! Stay cute!
Love,
Andrea

It kind of made me want to throw up. Next year, while I'm doing push-ups in a puddle of mud at Spag Union, Rowley and Andrea will be passing love notes to each other in home room.



The only thing that made the situation easier to swallow was knowing that sooner or later, Andrea is going to find out about the Cheese. I had half a mind to just tell her today and save her a lot of headaches down the road. But I kept quiet, at least for now.

The final kick in the pants came when I turned to the Favorites page of the yearbook.

Bryce Baron won Most Popular, and Kenny Keith won Most Athletic, so no big surprises there.

But when I looked down the page, I almost gagged.

Class Clown
Rowley Jefferson

All I can say is, if anyone wants a free yearbook, they can dig one out of the trash can near the back of the cafeteria.

Tuesday, May 31st

You remember how Dad got all mad at me for not handing in that envelope at school? Well, he was still huffing and puffing about it today. I started to wonder what was so important about that envelope, so I dug it out of the trash can and opened it up.

At first, I was pretty confused. It was a form Dad filled out to volunteer himself to chaperone my class' end-of-the-year trip to King's Island.

I couldn't figure out why in the world Dad would want to pack himself in a bus with a bunch of 13-year-olds and spend the day at an amusement park. But then I realized what he was up to.

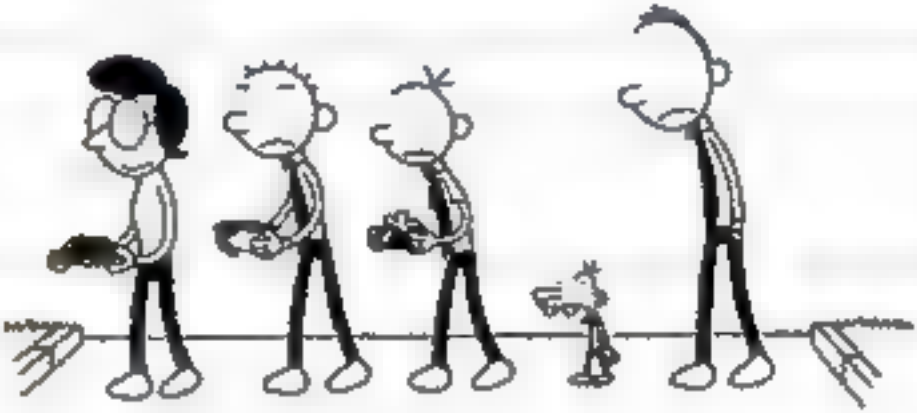
The King's Island trip is TODAY. And the only reason Dad volunteered to chaperone was so that he could get out of going to the Smedley half-birthday party, which is also today. So Dad figured that while the rest of us were stuck at the party, he'd be 100 miles away, relaxing by the wave pool.

And since I didn't turn in that envelope, I messed up Dad's plan. But you know what? I don't feel bad about it. If I'm going off to military academy for four years, then Dad can suffer through a kid's half-birthday party for a few hours.

The reason Dad doesn't want to go is because at these Smedley parties, all the grown-ups have to take turns doing ridiculous things to try to make the baby laugh. And Mr. Smedley videotapes the whole thing.

Let's just say crawling around on all fours and barking like a dog in front of a six-month-old isn't Dad's idea of a good time. But Mom said everyone in the family had to go, so that's that.

So we all headed to the party at around 1:30.

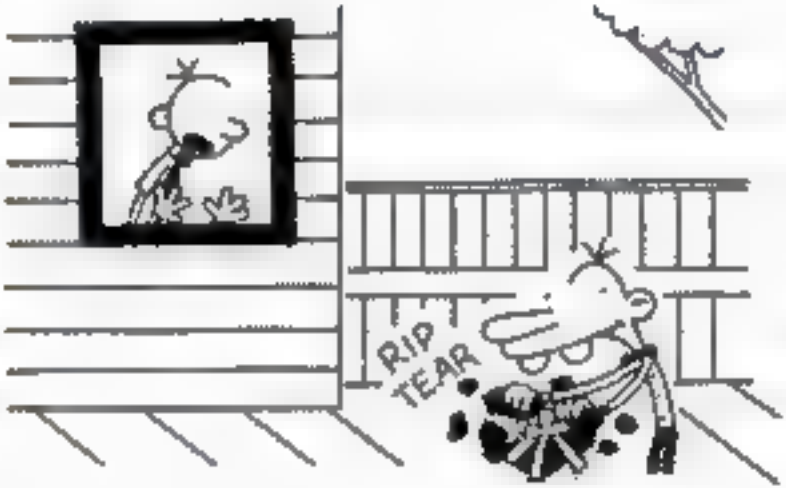


It seemed like the whole neighborhood was there. Everyone was eating and talking outside on the back deck. Then at 2:30, Mr. Smedley rounded everyone up for the main event.

Mr. and Mrs. Smedley had all of the grown-ups line up in front of the baby. Dad made sure to get at the end of the line.

But as the time passed, the line got shorter and shorter. And at 3:15, Dad's number was just about up.

I was too ashamed to see my father act like a monkey in front of everyone, so I just went inside. That's when I spotted Manny.



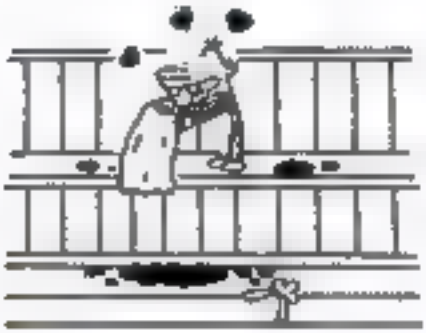
Manny was ripping open our family's present for the baby.

Ordinarily, I wouldn't have cared, but Mom put me in charge of the present and told me to make sure it got to the baby. And if she found out it was unwrapped, she was going to have a cow.

I ran outside to try and stop Manny. I thought maybe I could patch the wrapping paper back up with some Scotch tape, and Mom wouldn't know the difference.

But by the time I got to Manny, it was too late. And when I saw what the gift was, I knew things were about to get real complicated.

It was a pink knit blanket, exactly like the one Manny used to have as a baby.



And from seeing Manny's reaction, I knew he wasn't going to give it up without a fight.

When Manny was really little, Mom knit him a blanket, and it was his favorite thing in the whole wide world.

Manny used to carry that thing around everywhere, even after it started to fall apart.

In fact, the blanket basically disentigrated into a few strands of string, which is why Manny started calling it "Tingy." After a while, there wasn't anything holding that blanket together except for raisins and boogers.

But Manny still loved it. Whenever Manny came around with Tingy, I just tried not to let it touch me.

One day last year, Dad found Tingy on the couch. He must not have known what it was, because he threw it in the garbage.

So if you ever want to know why Manny hasn't spoken a word to Dad since November, that's the reason right there.

So when Manny opened that present, he thought he had found himself a brand-new Tingy. I tried to explain to him how this was a gift for the baby, and not for him.

But right when I thought Manny was going to hand the blanket over, he turned around and chucked it over the deck.

I guess Manny decided that if he couldn't have it, no one could.

I climbed over the deck to get the blanket. But there's a giant dropoff behind the Smedley's house, so it wasn't as easy as just grabbing the blanket and hopping back up on the deck.

At the bottom of the hill, there was a 10-foot drop, and I started to lower myself down over the ledge. But right before I jumped down, I saw that there was a yellow jackets' nest right where I was going to land.

I tried to pull myself back up over the ledge, but I couldn't.

And that's pretty sad, because all I really needed to do was the equivalent of one pull-up.

I tried to think of what I ate today to give myself an energy boost, but here's all I could come up with: a grape soda and the icing off of three cupcakes. So I was pretty much out of luck.

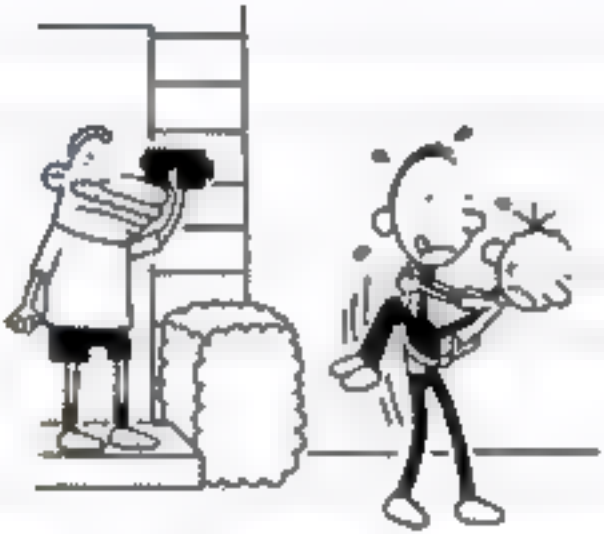
I landed right on the hive. I outran most of the bees, but not all of them. By the time I made it back up to the party, I must've gotten stung ten times.

When I stepped up on the deck, all the grown-ups crowded around me, making a big fuss.

I started to tell everyone I was OK, but that's when Dad jumped in.

I told Dad that Rodrick's the one who's allergic to bees, not me. But Dad didn't want to hear it.

I think Mr. Smedley was pretty disappointed he didn't get the shot of me falling onto the yellow jackets' nest, because that would have guaranteed him at least third place on America's Funniest Home Videos.



Dad ran me out of there as fast as he could. But once we got into our own yard, Dad was totally relaxed. In fact, I don't think I've ever seen Dad in as good a mood as he was at that moment.

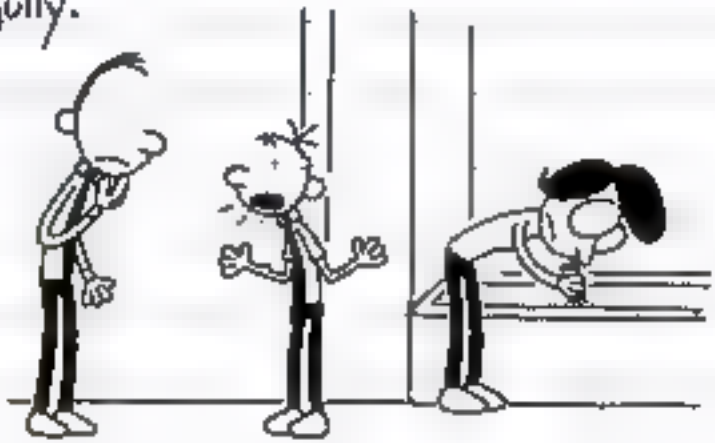
It turns out Dad was next up to perform for the Smedley baby, so for Dad, the timing of my accident couldn't have been any better.

I understand that Dad just got out of a sticky situation and all, but from the way he was acting, you'd think he had just escaped his own execution.

The bee stings actually didn't hurt that bad, so Dad didn't take me to the hospital. Mom came home a few minutes later and made me an oatmeal bath to soak in.

Dad asked me what happened back there at the Smedleys. Ordinarily, I wouldn't be too eager to tell Dad an embarrassing story about myself, but I figured at that point, I didn't have anything to lose.

So I told him everything, even the part about how I didn't have the strength to pull myself out of the gully.



After that, I got into my oatmeal bath, and as I was sitting there, I figured this was probably one of the lowest points in my life.

But then, a miracle happened. About 15 minutes later, Dad walked up to the the bathroom door, and here's what he said:

I couldn't believe my ears. Dad was actually changing his mind about sending me to Spag Union.

Dad must have figured out the only thing that saved his hide today was my wimpiness. And that being a wimp isn't such a bad thing after all.

And who knows? Maybe he'll change his mind again tomorrow. I won't bother to unpack my bags in case he does.

But for now, I think it's safe to say that today was the best day of my life.

CLICK "NEXT" FOR THE LAST ENTRY!

Wednesday, June 1st

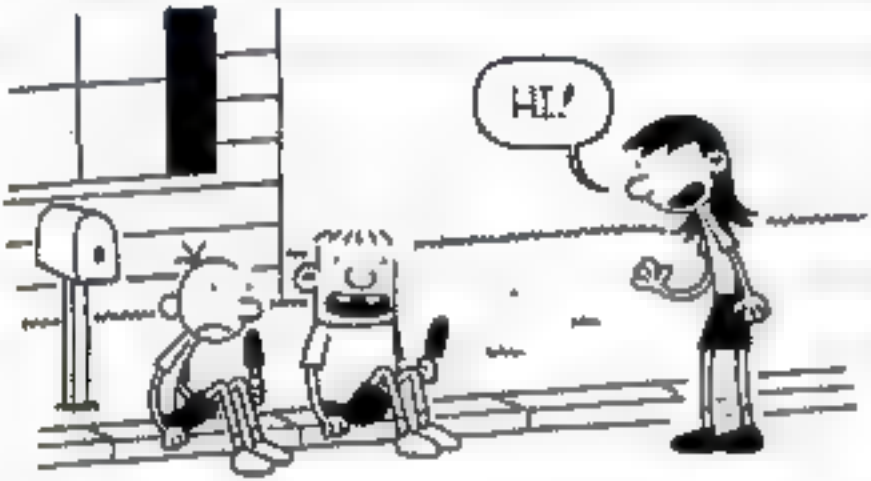
When I woke up today, it took me a while to realize yesterday wasn't just a dream.

Instead of this being my first day of military academy, it was actually my first day of summer vacation.

I stayed in bed until noon. I didn't know what to do with all my free time, so I went up to Rowley's house.

I told Rowley I didn't have to go to Spag Union after all, but he didn't seem to have a clue about what Spag Union even was. Which just shows you how oblivious Rowley can be sometimes.

Anyway, we were sitting outside eating popsicles, and you'll never guess what happened. A really cute girl I had never seen before walked up to me and Rowley and introduced herself. She said her name was Trista.



Trista was from New Mexico, and her family just moved into Chirag's old house.

I looked over at Rowley, and it was pretty obvious he was thinking the same thing I was thinking. So I came up with a plan to take care of the problem.

But then I had a better idea. Rowley belongs to a country club, and he's allowed to bring two guests to his pool every day.

So my summer is shaping up pretty nicely after all.

You know, Mom hasn't been checking to see if I've been keeping my journal up. So I'm going to see if I can get away with not doing it for a while.

I know it's totally corny to end a book with a happy ending, but I'm almost out of paper anyway, so I guess this is

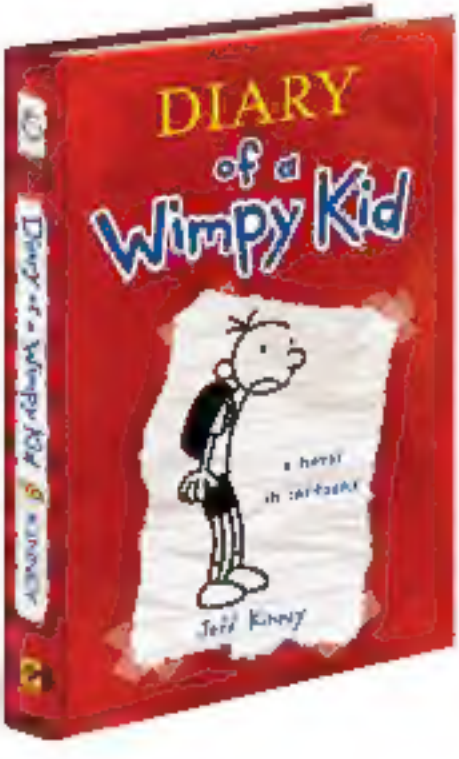
THE END.

CLICK "NEXT" FOR MORE ON DIARY OF A WIMPY KID!

For those who want to know more about this book, I've put together a "Frequently Asked Questions" section. Enjoy!

Q: Is Diary of a Wimpy Kid being made into a "real" book?

A: Yes! Actually, the online version is being made into FIVE books, each one 224 pages long. The first book is in bookstores and at Wal Mart and Target now, and it's about Greg, Rowley, and, of course, the Cheese. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid 2: Rodrick Rules*, which is about Greg and Rodrick, comes out in early 2008. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid 3: The Last Straw*, which is about Greg, his dad, and Spag Union, comes out in fall of 2008.



Buy Book One

Sign up to be emailed when the next book comes out

Read my BLOG!

Q: Will the first three books be identical to the web version?

A: No. I've made lots of improvements to the writing and drawings to make the storylines fit into three 224-page books. I think you'll like the results!

Q: What will happen in the fourth book?

A: The fourth book will be all about Greg's summer vacation, and will feature stories that don't appear in the web version.

Q: How old are you, and where do you live?

A: I'm in my mid 30s. I live in southern Massachusetts. I have a wife and two boys of my own!

Q: Is there a way to write to the author?

A: Yes. You can reach me at wimpykid@comcast.net. If you are under 13 years old, I would encourage you to get your parents' permission before writing. Unfortunately, because of the number of emails receive, I'm usually a few months behind. But I will try to reply to every email I receive!